FEMINISM FEMININITY AND REALITY- A RELATED TRIO ----!

(DECONSTRUCTION THROUGH LANGUAGE)

Thesis submitted to Kannada University
For Ph.D Degree

Research Scholar
Mandeep Chawla M.A.,B.Ed

Guide
Dr. H.S. Sreemathi
Professor
Department of Women's Studies
Kannada University, Hampi.



Department of Women's Studies
Language Faculty
Kannada University
Vidyaranya
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CERTIFICATE OF THE GUIDE

Ms. MANDEEP CHAWLA has registered in the Women's Studies center, Kannada University, Hampi, for her award in Ph.D Women's Studies under my guidance.

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **FEMINISM FEMININITY AND REALITY-A RELATED TRIO —! (DECONSTRUCTION THROUGH LANGUAGE)** has been submitted by Ms. **MANDEEP CHAWLA** for the award in Ph.D degree. This has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree and this work is a record of the candidate's personal efforts.

Dr. H.S. Sreemathi
Guide and Professor
Department of Women's Studies
Kannada University, Hampi.

Place : ಹಂಪಿ

Date : 4.02.05

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DECLARATION

[illegible] FEMINISM FEMININITY AND REALITY-A [illegible] CTION THROUGH LANGUAGE) has been [illegible] registration under the able guidance of Dr. H. S. [illegible] Studies, Kannada University, Hampi.

[illegible] of my own effort and has not been submitted [illegible] for the award of any degree.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis titled **FEMINISM FEMININITY AND REALITY-A RELATED TRIO —! (DECONSTRUCTION THROUGH LANGUAGE)** has been written by me during the period of my Ph.D registration under the able guidance of **Dr. H. S. Sreemathi, Professor – Department of Women's Studies, Kannada University, Hampi.**

I also declare that this thesis is the result of my own effort and has not been submitted partially or full to any other University or Institution for the award of any degree.

Place : Vidyaranya

Date : 24/01/05

Signature of the Candidate

(Mandeep Chawla)

Acknowledgement

"A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history."

At the outset, I take this esteemed opportunity of thanking **Kannada University, Hampi** for giving me this esteemed and credible opportunity of doing and submitting my Ph.D [illegible] in its enriching banner.

I am deeply indebted to my **Guide Dr. H. S. Sreemathi, Professor-Department of Women's Studies, Kannada University, Hampi** for the valuable guidance and constant support she has extended to me through out the thesis. But for her constant propping up and [illegible] it would not have been possible to complete the thesis meaningfully. Her [illegible] gave strength to go ahead with the study despite [illegible].

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It is also my privilege to thank my colleagues **Mrs. Indiramani and Mrs. S. P.** [illegible] who have stood by me through thick and thin.

[illegible] with deep regards to my parents **Mr. [illegible] Bains and Mrs. Jaspal Bains** for helping me by extending the infrastructure for my Ph.D and continually following it up through their [illegible] critical remarks.

I [illegible] my honour to thank my respected **husband Mr. G. S. Chawla** for supporting me in times of difficulties and building up on the infrastructure through his spectacular and [illegible] that gave a definite essence to my work and enabled me to leave no stone unturned and march ahead with full vigour and zeal.

I would like to thank **Mr. Sunil Kumar and Mr. Nitesh kumar** for having beautifully typed my thesis, considering it as their own work and giving it their best.

I once again take this esteemed opportunity of thanking one and all directly and indirectly involved in my thesis, to render it, its present impetus.

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I take this humble opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my **Principal Madam - K. S. Uma Devi** for her support, advice coupled with the moral growth she has rendered to my personality over the years as my teacher.

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Pronote

In this Preface the Researcher would focus on the following important points:-

- A feminist critique of male psychoanalytic theory focuses on its negative constructions of feminine identity within a repressive patriarchal system of language; feminist theorists emphasise the pre-oedipal mother –child relationship to propose alternative accounts.
- The Researcher attacks 'the logic of the same' quoting Irigaray in western thought whereby two genders (female and male) are collapsed into a male norm, so that women remain unrepresented within our meaning system. Freud's 'penis-envy' makes this most explicit: feminine identity that is defined only as a lack.
- Points to a suspicious similarity between male valorization of a single sexual organ and privileging of a unitary notion of truth.
- Deconstructionist theory demonstrates that any privileged term depends on its subordinated opposing term. (The concept 'truth' gains meaning only in relation to the term 'false'). Irigaray insists that masculinity as phallic presence depends on defining femininity as lack.
- Cixous links the political violence produced by such binary oppositional thinking with a male libidinal economy based on possession and property: there can be no ownership without exclusion.
- Woman's libidinal economy is based on the 'gift' - giving without calculating return - and this is the foundation of a woman's practice of writing, which Cixous advocates as a means of discovering a feminine identity.
- The Researcher claims that feminine writing can never be defined; her own practice foregrounds excess as opposed to lack. It emphasises pre-Oedipal qualities of voice, rhythm, touch, when child and mother were one. It pluralises meaning to construct feminine identity as multiple, in opposition to the claim of patriarchal language to the unitary truth theorized.
- The Researcher theorizes a very similar pluralized woman's language, but while believing that men share pre-Oedipal bisexuality and so can produce 'feminine' writing, the Researcher's concern is gender-specific. She celebrates the multiple forms of the female sexual body and the loving identity of the mother - daughter bond.
- Biological accounts of gender tie women's destiny to their bodies, whereas psychoanalytic theories offer the most powerful explanation presently available of gender as socially constructed, not inborn.
- Freud's important discovery: we are born bisexual; 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are constructed with difficulty and are never secure. The first intense love of both sexes is the mother, who is perceived as part of a bodily continuum, not as a separate being.
- Separation from the mother is necessary to achieve self-identity. Fears of castration cause boys to repress incestuous desire and to identify with the father. This 'resolution' of the Oedipal conflict constructs the boy's 'normal' active masculine identity.

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- The little girl 'discovers' that she has been 'castrated', blames her mother and turns instead to her father as love-object. This constructs the 'normal' passive feminine identity.
- Freud's other key discovery is the unconscious. Incestuous desire and libidinal drives are repressed at the Oedipal stage, but they evade conscious censorship by processes of 'displacement' and 'condensation'. These unconscious energies ensure that our social gender identity is always precarious and unstable.
- Lacan rereads Freud in the light of structural linguistics, which sees language as a grid meaning (a structure of differences) imposed on the continuum of experience.
- Lacan theorizes a 'mirror' stage to initiate separation from the mother: this projects a narcissistic fantasy image of self. Separation is completed at the Oedipal stage when the child acquires language, seeking a desired 'self' in the social ideals that the meaning system offers.
- Language signifies the paternal (phallic) authority, which forbids incestuous desire for the mother. So women can never identify with its authority and are always alienated from its order of meaning – the symbolic order.
- Separation from the mother constructs the unconscious, which 'inhabits' language. Words are 'doubled': they name acceptable social goals, but also 'speak' our desire. 'I' is a social self which (mis) names a desiring unconscious.

PREFACE
Recovering Women From Feminist Deconstruction

"Golden fetters are no less galling to an individual than iron ones;
The sting lies in the fetters, not in the metal……"

Although espousing difference, feminist deconstructionist argument implicitly [illegible] the differing and sometimes multiple identities [illegible] constructed in the very recent past, by lesbians, older women, women of colour, disabled women, and working-class women (to name only some). What must it be like to be a women, having gone through much to have named oneself thus and to have recovered something of the history of one's [illegible], to have it implied that this is not only not enough but an [illegible] oversimplification to have done so? Theory from those who [illegible] other women's experience and who are now likely to [illegible]

What I [illegible] must be insisted upon by those of us, is that all difference must be [illegible]. In particular, there must be an end to the now ritual invocation of [illegible] which actually goes no further than a formula of words [illegible] of powers between man and woman situated differently. [illegible] category, but one internally differentiated on grounds of age, class, [illegible] and sexuality.

And yet there is much in Denise Riley (1988) and other feminist deconstructionist' arguments about the sociological experience of women as [illegible], as something we inhabit or are forced into only periodically, as it were at the points, the disjunctures, the fracturings, of ordinary being produced by actual oppressions in our lives. Nonetheless, oppression and its struggle cannot be neither denied nor silenced, nor explained away as a momentary and passing necessity transcended by the supposed greater intellectual rigour of deconstructionism. [illegible] view is that there are other alternative routes out of the political [illegible] described by Riley than those she suggests.

What has come to be described as the feminist standpoint epistemology-feminist social science research should start from the material experience of actual women and theorise from out of this -is itself a fractured position. Sandra Harding (1987) suggests that once one feminist standpoint, as a materially experientially grounded epistemology, is admitted to exist, then we need to consider the related possibilities. Once this is done, there is no prior epistemological ground or deciding of hierarchy of the standpoints - or of the super ordinate right or correct one over and against the other subordinate standpoints.

Oppressions cannot be weighted against each other. Those feminists who do attempt to put oppressions into a hierarchy against each other, need to have the moral and political, as well as intellectual, dubiousness of this, pointed out to them.

This opens up possibilities (and closes down dubious assumptions) for feminism. No longer claiming 'I am right, you are wrong.' We necessarily move into the realm of moral, the ethically/morally/politically preferable, into the realm of minded choice. It simultaneously enables us to reject the role of anyone- theorists of grand feminists theory, poets of [illegible]

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Although welcoming difference, feminist deconstructionist argument implicitly portrays as essentialism the differing and sometimes multiple identities painstakingly constructed in the very resent past, by lesbians, older women, women of colour, disabled women, and working-class women (to name only some). What must it be like to be a women, having gone through much to have named oneself thus and to have recovered something of the history of one's foremothers, to have it implied that this is not only not enough but an intellectual error, an ontological oversimplification to have done so? Theory from those who were once the certified namers of other women's experience and who are now likely to become the certified deconstructors of the same.

What is needed - and indeed must be insisted upon by those of us, is that all difference must be attended to equally. In particular, there must be an end to the now ritual invocation of woman as the only difference seen but which actually goes no further than a formula of words that leaves untouched actual relations of powers between man and woman situated differently. This also masks a refusal to see that women are itself no unitary category, but one internally differentiated on grounds of age, class, able-bodiedness and sexuality.

And yet there is much in Denise Riley (1988) and other feminist deconstructionist' arguments about the ontological experience of women as shaky, as something we inhabit or are forced into only periodically, as it were at the points, the disjunctures, the fracturings, of ordinary being introduced by actual oppressions in our lives. Nonetheless, oppression and its struggle should be neither denied nor silenced, nor explained away as a momentary and passing necessity transcended by the supposed greater intellectual rigour of deconstructionism. And the Researcher's view is that there are other alternative routes out of the political oscillations described by Riley than those she suggests.

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common language, feminist deconstructors of the category women- to name and not to name on our behalf. This is not to dismiss, nor even to deconstruct, feminist deconstructionism. Rather, it is to welcome its strengths and also to recognize that, as Sandra Harding says in the discussion referred to above, although feminist standpoint approaches and feminist deconstructionism may be contradictory and even work towards somewhat different feminist ends, nonetheless we need them both.

Women in one history: drawing some conclusions

The Researcher now wants briefly to situate some of the points introduced above in relation to a discussion of some features of the particular history outside of her own area of research that she knows best. This is that contained in the unedited original Hannah Cullwick (1833-1909) diaries, as well as the edited published volume of these (Stanely, 1984).

One implication of the essentialist vs. deconstructionist debate within feminism is that a deconstructionist postmodern and non-essentialist view of the category of women is both new, and also provided by feminists and /or academics. The Researcher suggests that the first is a dubious assumption and can be easily shown to be so by looking closely at appropriate historical materials; and that the second is the equally dubious product of a traditional and actually elitist view of the Researcher/researched and theory/experience relationship, which locates the Researcher on a different critical plane and assigns theory to her (the researched experience, and the Researcher theorizes that experience).

In summary, it seems to the Researcher if to leave on one side the ridiculous assumption of positivist deductionist theoreticians, which people merely experience while theorizing, is the prerogative of special class of group, we can begin to recognize things that education regressively strips us from. One is that the complexities of the categories women and men are not reserved knowledge for theoreticians /researchers; any detailed examination of historical or contemporary people's lives conducted in a spirit of humility and a genuine desire to understand, would yield similar findings as the Researcher has outlined. Another is that, for as far back as we have sufficient biological information, we can discern such complexities in understanding of women and men. And yet another is that it thereby becomes patently obvious that theorizing is the stuff of everyday life, and understanding the attempts by feminist and other traditionalists to insist that experience is theoretically denuded is actually elitist and blinkered.

Deconstructing the symbolic Order: Irigarary and Cixous

Luce Irigaray's radical challenge to psychologists has a twofold purpose: to reveal the masculine ideology inscribed throughout our meaning system (the symbolic order) and to construct a feminine order of meaning with which to produce a positive sexual identity for women. In pursuing the first of these aims, Irigaray draws attention to what she calls the 'logic of sameness' operating within all dominant forms of language. By the 'logic of sameness' she means that a social reality containing two gender specificities (man and woman) is persistently collapsed into one and the same: 'Man [made] the measure of all things'. Psychoanalytic theory is one example of this, but it is a useful one for the Researcher's purpose in this thesis as she, through her varied chapters, would simply express phallocentricism or the 'logic of the same' in a very explicit manner. Through the major work, **The Speculum of the other Woman** (1974)[1], the Researcher demonstrates with detailed, often wickedly ironic, commentary on Freud's writing, how his theory of sexuality is constructed, in effect, on just one sex. There is masculinity and there is its absence: the

[1] Writing by many other French feminists is represented in Marks and de Courtivron (eds), New French Feminisms. See also Moi (ed.), French feminist Thought.

Researcher here desires to quote the difference as her research, evident through the varied concepts she has analyzed in her chapters as explained in brief here, brings forth the essence through the following quote-

"The 'feminine' as always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy [the clitoris is seen by Freud as an atrophied penis], as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex. Hence the all too well - known 'penis-envy'. How can we accept the idea that woman's entire sexual development is governed by her lack of, and thus by longing for ... the male organ? Does this mean that women's sexual evolution can never be characterized with reference to the female sex itself? All Freud's statements describing feminine sexuality overlook the fact that the female sex might possibly have its own 'specificity'.[2]"

The Researcher here would want to, through her research point out very many questions, one of them being to point and question the fact and the fissure that Freud, never questions the effects of breast atrophy in the male. His thinking on sex is entirely by masculine, perceptions: logic of the same. 'As a card-carrying member of an ideology' that he never questions, he insists that the sexual pleasure known as masculine is the paradigm of all sexual pleasure.[3] Thus his theorizing of femininity constructs a model of women's sexualitywhich functions only to affirm the primacy of masculinity. In effect, his concept of femininity becomes an empty mirror, which reflects back masculine sexuality as presence. Because the first stage of infancy is bisexual, Freud describes the pre-oedipal girl as a 'little man'; he does not, ofcourse, think of describing the pre-oedipal boy as a 'little woman'. The girl's active sexuality at that stage is termed 'masculine'; in other words, sexuality is a priori masculine for Freud. Women's 'discovery' of 'lack' functions within psychoanalytic discourse to confirm and valorize masculinity as the fullness of phallic possession and power. Within this logic of the same, a woman as denied any representation as presence, she is only a non-man: 'the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes.'[4]Irigaray acknowledges that Freud is disarmingly open in the way he elaborates this and that his explicitness allows us to recognize a logic which structures, not just psychoanalytic discourse, but a great deal of western thought.

Through the **Speculum of the Other Women,** the Researcher attempts to trace this pervasive logic of sameness back to a tradition of philosophical speculation beginning with Plato. This logic continually collapses two gender specificities (man and woman) into one, and its negative (man and not man) as in the form A and not A (or A-), rather than the logic of two different but autonomous terms such as A and B. In the former pair, only the first term has a positive value attached, the second term (A-) can have only an amorphous meaning as what A is not. [5] This is very similar to be Beauvoir's claims in The Second Sex that 'man' is always the positive term (the norm) and 'woman' the 'other' to that positive male as absolute subject.[6] Because of the ubiquity of this logic of sameness in traditions of western thought, Irigaray calls

2 Irigaray, This sex which is not One, p.69.
3 The Speculum of the other Woman, p.28.
4 Ibid. p. 27.
5 The Researcher's presentation here is indebted to Grosz, 'Luce Irigaray and Sexual Difference', in Sexual Subversions, pp. 104-7.
6 De Beauvoir, The Second sex, p. 16.

our culture homosexual, based on an exclusive privileging of the male as norm: 'This domination of the philosophical logos stems in large from its power to **reduce all others to the economy of the Same**.... from its power to **eradicate the difference between the sexes** in systems that are self-representative of a "masculine subject"[7]. From this perspective, the symbolic order can be conceived as a flat, reflecting surface mirroring back to men the presence and fullness of male identity. This is rather how the '**Functioning of Language**' is done, brought out through '**Deconstruction**', skillfully implementing '**Feminist Methodology**'. The ostensible object of the love, the woman, does not exist in language as a positive presence; **what the language constructs is an externalized representation of the male's own subjective sensibility**.

The logic of sameness, operating within the symbolic order, makes it impossible for women to represent themselves. Within dominant discourse, they are always 'off-stage, off-side, beyond representation beyond selfhood'.[8] Irigaray's critique of the phallocentricism within dominant forms of discourse-particularly philosophy and psychoanalysis – aims at undermining the claims of that language to disinterestedness, to the status of self–evident knowledge and truth. The Researcher here desires to point to suspicious similarities of form between the valorization of a single male organ, the phallus, in representations of masculinity and the privileging within patriarchal language of a unitary notion of truth. This privileging of sing[1]ularity does not correspond to the plural forms of the female body.

If Irigaray's negative project is seen as the deconstruction of patriarchal logic, the Researcher's positive quest is for a way, of theorizing and representing the specificity of 'femininity'- of women's sexual identity in positive terms. She wants to articulate sexual difference autonomously as A and B, rather than as A and A-. She wants to construct what has so far been only an absence in psychoanalytic discourse: an account of a feminine **imaginary** and feminine **symbolic** so that women can begin to represent themselves. The researcher will realize this quest for a feminine language through her present research.

Irigaray's critique of psychoanalytic and philosophical discourse shows the important influence on French feminists of the philosopher Jacques Derrida and his methods of deconstruction[9]. The significance of Derrida's work, as of Lacan's, lies in its radical rethinking of language and identity. His work can be seen as opening out and exploiting the most radical implications of structuralist linguistics, which originated in the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century.[10] Saussure demonstrated that there exists a gap between words and the world, meaning is an effect produced by language, and language produces meaning only as a system of difference. According to Derrida, however western thought has always operated on the opposite supposition; that meaning depends on what he calls 'a metaphysics of presence'. He uses this term to point out our persistent impulse to believe or assume that there is an inherent, immanent meaning or truth underlying the contingency of existence. Derrida's deconstructive readings of the tradition of philosophical thinking since Plato shows how our conceptual system utilizes a series of binary oppositions (oppositional terms) one of which is inevitably valued above the other. The privileging of one term over its opposite, functions to sustain a belief presence. One of his key examples is, the opposition between speaking and writing.

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7 Irigaray, This Sex which is not one, p. 74.

8 The Speculum of the other Woman, p. 22.

9 The key texts in which Derrida elaborates these ideas are Of Grammatology and Writing and Difference. For an introduction to Derrida's work see Norris, Derrida.

10 There is an outline of Saussure's ideas in preface too.

Derrida points out how persistently speech has been perceived as more 'genuine' than writing because the presence of a speaker is felt to guarantee a definite, that is unitary, intention or meaning to the words. In turn, the invisible thought held to be immanent 'behind' or 'within' the words is believed to be yet more 'true' to an originating, intending presence than the material words themselves: mind is hierarchized over body. Even Saussure seemed to privilege content or thought (signifieds) over the words or form (signifiers). 'In the beginning was the word' but behind the word, we want to believe, there is the presence of the god, or the researcher, some unique originating 'I', guaranteeing an intentional meaning or truth.

Derrida calls this belief in intentional unitary meaning, which under-lies western conceptual thought, 'logocentricism'. His strategy of deconstruction aims to undo the hierarchies of binary opposition by revealing how the privileged term actually depends on its subordinated opposite term. So, for example, the concept of good as originating in God appears prior to the notion of evil. However, what could have constituted a notion of 'goodness' in the unified existence of being prior to Lucifer's originating sin? We could argue that it is the act of evil, which makes possible the concept of goodness, just as it takes a caged bird to sing of freedom. Derrida's aim is not, of course, to stabilize this reversal of the binary hierarchy; that would simply substitute an alternative originating presence. Through these references, the aim of the researcher is to foreground his motion of **difference** (a word he coins to produce a fusion of differ – deferral or delay–with the idea of difference) to suggest the unfixed, unstable nature of meaning – its lack of any unitary defining fixity. Putting binary oppositions into the perpetual play of reversal, enacts the continual deferral of any one privileged meaning. There are obvious points of contract here with Lacan's denial of fixed meaning to the signifier 'I'. Subjective identity, according to Lacan, has no authenticating point of origin in a 'real', unitary self; it begins in a fantasy or mirage. Self is simply a continuous deferral of identity, enacted by the displacement of desire from one social ideal to another. The Cartesian 'I think, therefore I am' has been replaced by Lacan, with the notion of 'I think I am where I am not'.

> Irigaray shows how 'phallocentricity' shadows 'Iogocentricity'. The presence of the phallus has functioned to guarantee a unitary notion of masculine identity, which is inextricably intertwined in western systems of thinking, with unitary notions of truth and origins (logocentricity).

However, phallic presence depends on its subordinated binary other; it acquires meaning as fullness only by defining femininity as absence or lack. Masculinity as wholeness erects itself on femininity as hole.

Helene Cixous, like Luce Irigaray, has a two-dimensional project: also influenced by Derrida. She launches a deconstructive critique of the phallocentricism of the symbolic order and advocates the positive agenda of discovering an ecriture feminine- a **feminine practice of writing well explored by the researcher in her research.** Cixous's own writing, however, is more varied in its modes than that of Irigaray. Although first known in Britain by her theoretical texts, **she is predominantly a creative writer, a literary critic, novelist** and now a dramatist. In an early essay, 'sorties', in **The Newly Born Woman** (1975) **she swings into typically zestful attack on the working of binary opposition to uphold masculinity as origin and source of creativity.** Everywhere within discourse, Cixous claims the ordering by binary hierarchy persisting. What is more, the coupling is always a relationship of violence; language is 'a universal battlefield... Death is always at work' [11].

[11] Ibid., p. 64.

It is inevitably the feminine term that is killed or erased in the deadly pairing. Because logocentricism finds its origin in the phallus, Cixous maintains, life and creative power are constructed as male. 'Intention: desire, authority - examine that and you are led right back...to the father. It is even possible not to notice that there is no place whatever for woman in the calculations.'[12] We saw in the preceding paragraphs how this logic of exclusion or sameness works to deny women any role in creativity: the Researcher would here desire to cite the example of Christian mythology that offers a reading of procreation as male God creating man; and how Harold Bloom mythologizes literacy history as an exclusive fathering of sons... her satirical question in the thesis.

In Cixous's writing experience is used as a way of relating her theorizing to political realties. In 'sorties' she relates her sense of the violence of binary oppositions to her early life in Algeria as a French colony: 'So I am three or four years old and the first thing I see in the streets is that the world is divided in half, organized hierarchically, and that it maintains this distribution through violence'.[13] **What her personal experience showed her was** the working practice of 'the mechanism of the death struggle' involved in binary opposition. For this system of logic to work, "there has to be some "other" – no master without a slave, no economico-political power without exploitation, no dominant class without cattle under the yoke, no "Frenchmen" without wags, no Nazis without Jews, no property without exclusion'[14]. Cixous associates phallocentric language with a cultural order based on possession and property. Within such an order exchange is part of the system of power; nothing can be freely given. Patriarchy is maintained by the exchange of women as possessions from fathers to husbands always so as to control or gain something. In such an economy, the Researcher argues, 'what he wants... is that he gains more masculinity: plus-value of virility, authority, power, money or pleasure, all of which reinforce his phallocentric narcissism at the same time. Moreover, that is what society is made for - how it is made... Masculine profit is almost always mixed up with a success that is socially defined[15]. In contrast to the 'masculine' libidinal economy of 'property', a 'feminine' libidinal economy is that of the 'gift': 'she doesn't try to "recover her expenses". She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, pouring out, going everywhere to the other.... If there is a Self, proper to woman, paradoxically it is her capacity to depropriate herself without self-interest: endless body, without "end".[16]

Constructing a Feminine Writing

From the above quotations of Cixous's writing you will have perceived that **her own style of writing conveys a sense of outflow, of waves of energy.** She has said that 'it is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded- which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist[17]. **In her practice, the Researcher aims to embody a feminine form of writing and to encourage other women to do the same. Again, personal experience is important to her here. She has written movingly of her search for a sense of self as away out, an exit, a sortie, from an enclosing social identity she was born into as an** Algerian French girl who was also a Jew: 'There has to be somewhere else, I tell

[12] Ibid., P. 70.
[13] Ibid., p.71.
[14] Ibid., p.87.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., p.41.
[17] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', in Marks and deCourtivron (eds), New French Feminism, p. 253.

myself... Everyone knows that **a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system that is writing. If there is somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies that direction**.'[18]

'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) is Cixous's most impassioned appeal to women to follow her example and **discover a positive feminine identity though writing**. It shares and expresses the excitement and empowerment felt by many women in France and America during the 1970s and into the 1980s. More than any other text, **it is the manifesto of feminine writing, which is why it becomes a pre-requisite for the Researcher to speak, quote, analyze and deconstruct**. **Obviously then for the Researcher**, a woman's **practice of writing has to be based on a very different order of meaning to that of the** phallocentric symbolic order. **It would have to embody the libidinal economy of the 'gift' not of 'property'.** Here, hence are some typical passages from 'Medusa'. Bearing in mind the difficulties of translation as well as Cixous's warning that <u>ecriture feminine</u> can never be theorized, can we recognize qualities of style, language, tone syntax and values which embody and advocate a feminine practice of writing?

"We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, out wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces, the bevies – we are black and we are beautiful.

We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writings; and we're not afraid of lacking."

The Researcher quotes the above passage only to prove her point boisterously that in women's speech, as in their writing that element which never stops resonating, which, once we've been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us –that element is the song: first music from the first voice of creativity which is alive in every woman. Why this privileged relationship with the voice... a woman is never far from 'mother'... There is always within her, at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink.

Flying is woman's gesture – flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and it's numerous techniques: for centuries we've been able to posses anything only by flying; we've lived in flight, stealing away.

According to the Researcher, a feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written, it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust' carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There is no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the 'truth' with laughter.[19]

The easiest aspect to identify is the tone of these passages, which is celebratory and confident. Clearly, the researcher's aim is to reconstruct a meaningful sense of feminine identity to counteract what she sees as centuries of deadly brain-washing in which women have been taught to hate themselves. The insistent use of 'We the' in the first passage affirms a positive collective presence. The Researcher sees her language and her syntax overall her research itself as attempting to embody this collective feminine identity as spacious, generous and beneficent. Her diction ranges extravagantly from the poetic ('our lovely mouths gagged with pollen') to the theoretic ('carrier of masculine investments') to the colloquial ('There's

[18] Cixous and Clement, <u>The Newly Born Woman</u>, p.72.
[19] Cixous, '<u>The Laugh of the Medusa</u>', pp. 248,251,258.

no room for her if she's not a he, but a her-she'). She plays continually on the relation of sound and meaning, implying the presence of a speaking voice. She seeks out puns, finds associative echoes between words and often coins her own terms. A notable example here is her brilliant play on the two meanings of the French verb 'voler': to fly and to steal. Women simultaneously make words fly- soar free from old repressive moorings – and steal them away. But women have flown too, in men's fears as witches, creatures possessed of magical power. Thus, the Researcher's language is intensely metaphoric, it's meaning pluralized, heterogeneous. These stylistic qualities make translation of her work very difficult, of course. However, questions, exclamations and declaratory affirmations are used to convey the immediacy of voice. So do the many sentences beginning with 'And' or 'But'. Such syntax works accumulatively, rather than hierarchically. Sentences tend not to be structured and controlled by the grammatical logic of main and subordinate clauses; instead phrases and clauses pile up and spill over into the next idea: 'Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end.' The syntax materializes this libidinal expenditure without division. Thus, instead of the feminine as lack and absence, **Cixous's writing practice in 'Medusa', for example embodies abundance, creative extravagance, playful excess, the physical materiality of the female body.**

The Researcher's association of language with voice hence, is not just a matter of style; it has deeper significance. Both Freud's and Lacan's theories of sexuality depend heavily on the sense of sight for the registering of lack. As Freud says of the little girl; 'She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it.'[20] **In linking language to voice, the Researcher is moving back beyond the Oedipal stage to the pre-Oedipal relation between mother and child, a time dominated by the tactile and by sound and rhythm far more than by the visual. It is a phase of imaginary abundance, when there seems no end to bodily extension or pleasure, no division of self and mother so that a child is able 'to love herself and return in love the body that was "born" to her.** Touch me, caress me you the living no-name, give me my self as myself.'[21] **This according to the researcher is the 'song of the unconscious, giving access to desire, to a repressed memory of first sensuous knowledge of the body as erotic delight, to language as rhythm, sound pattern and intimate presence. It is this song coded into the body's materiality that must in form and shape initiate a feminine practice of writing.**

'The Laugh of the Medusa' **is usually classed as part of Cixous's theoretical writing, but obviously she is not easily categorized. Her stylistic excess deliberately spills over the boundaries that usually divide what we would term 'creative' writing from the academic.** Unfortunately, not much of her fiction or drama is so far available in English translation. **Here is a brief passage from the beginning of her novel** Angst. **Can it too be read as exemplifying Cixous's notion of feminine writing? The researcher quotes this extract with a definite purpose in mind which is to deconstruct the theories theorizing women may they be writers or ordinary housewives/working women; a strong infrastructure on which her thesis is built…**

"Suddenly you know all is lost. Everything. Suddenly all is known. No more scene, yet no end. Cut. You say I And I bleed. I am outside. Bleeding, yet formless, helpless, almost bodiless- in and out of my body, in pain. Here, I no longer have what I once had; you

[20] 'Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the sexes', in On Sexuality, p. 336

[21] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', p.252.

no longer know what you once knew. You're not there any more. Outside, frozen. Motionless. Deported. Displaced. I still want to have; I still want to be able. Attacked. I want to be on the way to love, to death. To hold on to what is going to disappear. Still losing. Not dead, worse, the body, here. Separate. Flesh; separation."[22]

Obviously, this is not celebratory; what is articulated, it seems, is the physical terror and pain of loss. But loss of what and to whom? The syntax here is far more dislocated than in the 'Medusa' passages. There, the overspill of sentence structure seemed to embody the extensive, unboundaried quality Cixous was claiming for a feminine identity. Here, the syntactic fragmentation enacts the rupture and tearing apart that is being expressed. In neither case, though, is the syntax governed by logic or rational order; the sentence structure in both seems to derive from the strong underlying pulse of feeling. What makes the Researcher quote these references specially the Angst passage, is to point out the difficulty to pin down the slide of the pronouns between 'I' and 'You'; are one person or two involved here? It is impossible to be sure. It is largely this, which according to the researcher gives **writing its sense of energy and spontaneity,** but it can also be used, as here, to deny the linear ordering of temporal sequence. **We are gripped by the simultaneous immediacy of each phrase and cannot arrange it into a meaningful before and after. A similar disorientation is produced in spatial terms** as 'inside' and 'outside', 'here' and 'there' slide through each other. While the writing seems intensely subjective, it refuses to settle into a coherent unitary 'I' as character or narrator. **It is tempting to read the passage as dramatizing the pain of the child's separation from the mother** at the moment of birth, **but it can suggest other experiences of bereavement and loss. The refusal of unitary meaning or of single identity, the attempt to bring language close to the bodily materiality of emotion and to capture in syntax the rhythm of libidinal drive will all be seen by the Researcher, as a part of femininity and feminine writing practice.**

In 'The Laugh of the Medusa' Cixous associates a feminine text with subversiveness: 'It is volcanic', she says. How could the qualities recognized above, be seen as a threat to or as undermining the status quo of existing power structures, particularly that of patriarchy?

According to the researcher, here the threat resides in the challenge such a writing practice asserts to the determining power as in terms of may it be feminism, femininity reiterating Lacan's sense of the symbolic order. For Lacan, the language system is the totalizing order of culture and it is an order enacting the repressive Law of the Father: phallocentricism as the researcher terms it. Entry into this order for all human beings is enforced by loss (of the mother) and a denial of their experience of bisexual unboundaried being. For women there is no compensatory identification with paternal authority; their subject position is always one of marginality to the patriarchal order.

A feminine practice of writing is offered here as a means of resistance; the word-play, metaphors and punning exemplified in the Researcher's style challenges (explodes it with laughter) any insistence on unitary meaning, the logic of the same, asserting instead that 'nothing is simply one thing'. The syntax attempts to track the libidinal pulse of repressed desire; rhythm and sound patterns convey a sensuous tactile immediacy rather than rational mastery of what is other and separate. Identity slips free of a unified 'I' into a polyvalent play of the multiple possibilities of self: 'I' and 'you' not 'I' or 'you'. Such heterogeneity mocks any authoritative or dominant language which must always insist on its version of 'truth', identity' and 'knowledge' as single and unquestionable. The subversiveness of a feminine practice of writing, then, is aiming to undermine the underlying

[22] Cixous, Angst p. 7.

logic, the very perception of reality on which the present structure of cultural order rests so much so even the research. It is only for this reason the Researcher would want to use the metaphor of women as moles tunnelling out of the darkness imposed on them: 'We are living in an age where the conceptual foundation of an ancient culture is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole. When the process is successful, 'all the stories would be there to retell differently, the future would be incalculable'.[23]

The general project of constructing a woman's language or writing, and the Researcher's advocacy of it in particular, may be criticized as utopian and a historical. If the symbolic order is perceived as a totalizing system of meaning which wholly determines our perception of reality, then any opposing 'language' would have to exist outside the social and cultural. It would have to occupy some ideologically pure realm beyond the paternal law, but in doing so, it would be beyond historical reality as well. It is difficult to see how such a language could ever make contact with the symbolic so as to contest it in a materially effective way. In fact, Lacan's own conceptualizing of the symbolic order as universal repressive law inevitably constructs just such an oppositional linguistic space for its asocial 'other'. In that respect Cixous could be seen as still caught up in his patriarchal logic, falling into the very practice of binary hierarchizing she labels 'death-dealing'. She simply elevates the asocial, libidinal 'other' language against a repressive social law.

A related criticism levelled by the Researcher as Cixous's notion of ecriture feminine, is with the aim of urging a woman to 'write herself' as by returning to the libidinal drives of the body, she is inevitably falling into a form of biologism or essentialism. The lyrical advocacy of the return to the mother, or writing, in 'white ink', would seem to confirm this suspicion. Moreover, the effect of emotional spontaneity, the rejection of syntactic order in her own writing could be seen as affirming as 'feminine', the kinds of qualities - emotionalism, irrationality, disorder – that men have been only too pleased to characterize as women's identity and writing.

The Researcher is aware of both these dangers. One reason why she insists that a feminine practice of writing cannot be defined, is to prevent it from being slotted into place as a binary opposition to the symbolic. Part of her research in the deconstructive critique of the symbolic order, focuses on the construction of woman as 'nature' in the binary pairing 'culture/nature' so as to erase women from history. It therefore seems unlikely that she would propose a feminine form of writing that would affect the same erasure. In trying to look towards a new order of meaning, the Researcher will, ofcourse, resort only to the old words which carry with them the traditional freight of cultural meaning: 'men and women are caught up in a network of millennial cultural determinations of a complexity that is practically unanalyzable: we can no more talk about "woman" than about "man" without getting caught up in an ideological theatre, where the multiplication of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications constantly transforms, deforms, alters each person's imaginary order and in advance, renders all conceptualization null and void.'[24]

Throughout her work, the Researchers persistently links writing and theory with political realities, possible only through the implication of feminist deconstructive theory. For all these reasons, her advocacy of a feminine writing practice is probably best seen as strategic. She is waging a guerilla campaign within the 'ideological theatre' of phallocentricism, hoping thereby to reform the deformed term **'Feminism'** and **'Woman'**. **Her use of the word 'Mother' is, she says, a metaphor;[25] which is a part of the positive**

[23] Cixous and Clement, The Newly Born Woman, p. 65

[24] Ibid., p.83.

[25] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', P. 252.

project of refiguring the feminine as plenitude. Moreover, the aim to discover a form of writing that will affect a sorte from the controlling domain of the symbolic order to the repressed pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother is, for the Researcher, a way out from an imposed unitary sexual identity towards the release of each person's potential bisexuality. Female and male children experience the pre-Oedipal alike; both sexes can therefore draw on its libidinal energies to construct a feminine practice of writing. At the present time, for historico-cultural reasons, the Researcher sees women more than men as 'opening up to and benefiting from this vatic bisexuality which doesn't annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number'.[26] However, she cites Jean Genet, as one male writer who is open to the anarchic force of bisexual desire and hence to pursuing a feminine writing practice.

This brings us to another phase of this research, that is of other French feminists; that they are elitist. The kind of writing they advocate is frequently difficult and the literacy texts they admire are invariably those of avant-grade writers like Genet and James Joyce for instance. Insisting on heterogeneity of meaning, syntactic dislocation and pluralizing of identity do not make for easy reading, and the revolutionary potential of such texts is questionable. The impact of the extract from *Angst* is undeniable, but is it accessible to as many women as a text like Agnes Smedley's Woman of Earth, for example? Eyebrows have also been raised at Cixous's claim in 'Medusa' that 'we are black'.

Although she comes originally from Algeria, can she really speak for black women?
However, the researcher here, through her ideas may provide us with useful insights into a wider range of writing than she herself demonstrates. For example, D.H. Lawrence is a troubling writer to her. His fiction, and even more so, his non-fiction, appears to advocate feminine submission to and submergence in the phallic power of masculinity as the only 'naturally' fulfilling and balanced relationship between the sexes. Both Kate Millett and Simone de Beauvoir singled out Lawrence for his phallocentric views, which is why these writers become central to the Researcher research. However, consider the following passage from his short story 'The Fox'. The emotional and sexual control of the heroine, March, has been disturbed, first by an encounter with a wild fox and then by the sudden appearance of a young man, Henry, who reminds her in some uncanny way of the fox. Is it possible to make a link here with any quality or image Cixous associates with a feminine unconscious?

That night March dreamed vividly. She dreamed she heard a singing outside which she could not understand, a singing that roamed round the house' in the fields, and in the darkness. It moved her so that so that she felt she must weep. She went out, and suddenly she knew it was the fox singing. He was very yellow and bright, like corn.[27]

Lawrence's syntax is rhythmical and his language metaphoric. What the researcher is struck by, though, is that Lawrence represents March's unconscious here primarily through the image of a song, a music originating outside the social order of the house. The sound seems to affect her like a nostalgia, for something lost; hearing the song 'she felt she must weep'. Later in the text a 'sort of semi-dream' March again seems to hear thefor singing 'wildly and sweetly like a madness'.[28] In the text this is left unconnected to the boy Henry or the fox itself. In these passages the dream fox and dream song are associated only with March's unconscious, suggesting an unboundaried, ambiguously passive and active realm of sexuality. This imagery of singing has always puzzled the Researcher. It remains marginalized, even at odds with the main projection of the narrative in which March is pursued as Henry's quarry

[26] Ibid., 254.
[27] The Ladybird, pp. 99-100.
[28] Ibid., p.110.

and made captive to his masculine hunter's will. Could it be that Lawrence allowed a momentary opening (a sortie) here to an opposing sensibility, an access to the libidinaleconomy of the 'gift', unboundaried and excessive, instead of the libido possession and mastery? Perhaps this 'opening up to and benefitting from' his own bisexuality was so disturbing for Lawrence that it accounts for what in narrative logic is the unnecessary killing of the fox by Henry. It is necessary only to bring a potentially transgressive sexuality that irrupts into the text back under control. When March sees the dead fox there is no longer the slightest ambiguity about its masculine identity or the fundamental difference of that identity to herself as female. The binary division threatened by wild a song, is firmly redrawn:

"March stood there bemused, with the head of the fox in her hand. She was wondering, wondering, wondering over his long fine muzzle. For some reason it reminded her of a spoon or a spatula. She felt she could not understand it. The beast was a strange beast to her, incomprehensible, out of her range. Wonderful silver whiskers he had like ice-threads, and pricked ears with hair inside. But that long, long, slender spoon of a nose! and the marvellous white teeth beneath! It was to thrust forward and bite with, deep, deep, deep into the living prey, to bite and bite the blood."[29]

Luce Irigaray, like Cixous, wants a feminine writing practice with which to challenge a repressive and determining symbolic order. She, too believes that only in a different order of meaning will it be possible to construct a positive representation of feminine identity. Like Cixous, she attempts to embody in her own style a sense of what such a practice would entail. It is for this reason the Researcher, summarizes her arguments.

The Researcher has attempted at, in this **Preface** a very simplified version of what these feminist writers have done to modulate the identity of a woman. Her linguistic playfulness is note worthy. She is wary of making utopian claims for any immediate or easy construction of a completely alternative women's language in opposition to phallocentric discourse. She is aware that this would simply replace one logic of the same by another: 'What is important is to disconcert the staging of representation according to exclusively "masculine" parameters, that is, according to a phallocratic order. It is not a matter of toppling that order so as to replace it – that amounts to the same thing in the end – but of disrupting it and modifying it, starting from an "outside" that is exempt in part, from phallocratic law'.[30]
The Researcher thus evolves the strategy for a disruptive feminine writing that has much in common with that of: a dispersal of any unitary subjective 'I', punning and word - play, and syntactic disjunction. In contrast to the mirror effect of the symbolic order which projects a self – reflective image of the fullness and presence of masculine identity, she envisages a feminine practice of writing as going through the **'looking-glass Imagery'** rendered by **Virginia Woolf**, in her **'A Room of One's Own** '. To elucidate it explicitly, the Researcher desires to quote Alice (A-Luce), into a wonderland of women's self-representation:

Alice's eyes are blue, and red. She opened them while going through the mirror... She only goes out to play her role as mistress-Schoolmistress, naturally, where-unalterable facts are written down whatever the weather. In white and black, or black and white, depending on whether they're put on the blackboard or in the notebook, without colour changes in any case. Those are saved for the times when Alice is alone, behind the screen of representation, in the house or garden.[31]

29 Ibid., p.124.

30 Irigaray, This Sex which is not One p.68.

31 Ibid., p.9.

In opposition to language as the mirror of masculine presence, the Researcher associates the metaphor of a speculum with a feminine form of representation. Its curved surface produces a deforming image, which reverses the narcissistic reflections of phallocentric discourse. Perhaps then 'the specular surface which sustains discourse [will be] found not the void of nothingness but the dazzle of multifaceted speleology {literally the study of caves; here of interiors, concavities}, a scintillating and incandescent concavity.[32] Moreover, this curved shape of the speculum accords with the inner specificity of the female body, figuring a mode of a self-representation founded on the intimacy of touch, not a distancing projected mirror image, which is why the Researcher explores into the concept of femininity having a naxalite effect. To affirm it, she quotes Irigaray even more than Cixous to criticize the priority given to sight in Freudian and Lacanian constructions of sexuality. Her significant references would also relate to, in the coming chapters, to **Ibsen's Doll's** house and **The Inner Courtyard** symbolizing the above mentioned naxalite effect. She also explores the intimacy of the mother-child pre-oedipal phase where, knowledge and experience are first and foremost based on touch. Touching, she points out, cannot lead to any sense of feminine sexuality as lacking. In contrast to the primacy given to the phallus within a unitary masculine identity based on the privileging of sight, a woman's body is not lacking but multiple. Scorning the Freudian contention that women are forced to choose at puberty between clitoral and vaginal orgasm, she writes, 'Why has the woman been expected to choose between the two, being labelled "masculine" if she stays with the former, "feminine" if she renounces the former and limits herself to the latter?... In fact, a woman's erogenous zones are not the clitoris or the vagina, but the clitoris and the vagina, and the vulva, and the mouth of the uterus, and the uterus itself, and the breasts... what might have been, ought to have been, astonishing is the multiplicity of genital erogenous zones (assuming the qualifier "genital" is still required) in female sexuality.' [33]

Thus the Researcher's research practice foregrounds multiplicity, fluidity and the erotic intimacy of touching as a way of metaphorically representing a feminine identity, of figuring the colourful 'garden' of the female imaginary behind, 'the screen of [masculine] representation'. Her concern with the pre-oedipal phase is also gender specific. She is not concerned with the pre-Oedipal phase is also gender specific. She is not concerned with bisexuality; it is the mother-daughter relationship she wants to reconceptualize. This is because she sees women's inability to represent their identity in positive terms as caused, in large part, by the deformation of the mother-daughter bond within the symbolic order. Within the present patriarchal culture 'motherhood' is allowed only a diminished meaning. It is denied any social or economic status, but equally it's meaning is kept rigidly separate from the procreative moment – from any notion of sexuality. Creativity is thus, preserved as a godlike and male domain, and motherhood is reduced to the function of nurture and care. Because of this diminished value of the meaning of the term 'mother', there is a risk for women of a compensating over-investment in 'self'-denial, in non-being, or in an over-possessive maternity.

A daughter must separate from maternal nurture to gain identity. Within the restricted meaning allotted to the term 'mother' this entails a total loss, since no other identity is allowed but that of nurturing. Thus, according to the researcher it's the oedipal crisis that exiles the girls from their first history and identity, rendering them unknown and unknowable

[32] Irigaray, The Speculum of the Other Woman, p. 143

[33] Irigaray, This Sex which is not One, pp. 63-4.

to themselves. What is needed is a new language, which can represent the mother as also woman, which can construct a maternal identity that includes sexuality as fullness. Such a language the researcher says would allow both mother and daughter a separate identity while maintaining the loving unity of the maternal bond. It would be a relationship of one and other at the same time. To explicitly explain this the Researcher here desires to quote Irigaray who seeks to figure such a relationship in her lyrical essay 'When Our Lips Speak Together'. In this extract, notice the qualities, the writing shares with Cixous celebratory construction of feminine identity and language and also consider the kind of criticisms the might be made about it, by the Researcher.

I love you: our two lips cannot separate to let just one word pass. A single word that would say 'you' or 'equals'; she who loves and she who is loved. Closed and open, neither ever excluding the other, they say they both love each other. Together...

Open your lips, don't open them simply. I don't open them simply. We - you/I- are neither open nor closed. We never separate simply: a single word cannot be pronounced, produced, uttered by our mouths. Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once...

Kiss me. Two lips kissing two lips: openness is ours again. Our 'world', and the passage from the inside out, from the outside in, the passage between us is limitless, without end. No knot, no loop, no mouth ever stops our exchanges. Between us the house has no wall... When you kiss me, the world grows so large that the horizon itself disappears.[34]

.. This particular piece of writing by Irigaray is more sensuously erotic than the passages from 'Medusa', but it expresses a similar affirmation of feminine identity and sexuality as open, flowing, abundant, multiple, as opposed to the masculine valorization of a single organ. Irigaray uses the image of women's lips to suggest the plurality of their sexuality; women's genitals are naturally self-caressing, she says, and this figures the desired loving unity within separation, which should be possible for mother and daughter, woman and woman. Does the affirmation of a language and identity based on the physical sensuality of the female body leave Irigaray open to the criticisms of proposing a utopian escape from the social and of essentialism? In relation to the first of these charges, the Researcher here argues that 'the "two lips" is not meant as a truthful image of female anatomy but as a new emblem by which female sexuality can be positively represented... Irigaray's project can be interpreted as a contestation of patriarchal representations at the level of cultural representation itself. The two lips is a manoeuvre to develop a different image or model of female sexuality.' [35] The two lips function as a metaphor of the multiplicity of women's eroticism and for the potential of a woman's language to speak that polymorphous excess. This is a convincing argument, and it is clear that Irigaray consistently regards the human body as always coded within a network of cultural meaning. There is no way of figuring the female body outside the symbolic order; there is no other language available.

Nevertheless, the Researcher's aim here is to theorize the separate sexual specificity of a feminine self; she is not concerned with the notion of pre-Oedipal bisexuality. It is difficult to see how this specifically feminine identity can ever be conceptualized without involving some form of essentialism. However, we should remember that the Researcher's concept of sexual difference takes the form of A and A-. Perhaps, as some feminists are

[34] Ibid., pp. 208,209,210.

[35] Grosz, Sexual Subversions, p. 116.

beginning to argue, this form of difference not founded on the denigration of the subordinated term could produce an essentialism, which no longer poses a threat to women's positive identity.[36]

However, this might point towards another problem: the danger that sexuality becomes wholly synonymous with subjectivity. Is there not more to feminine identity than being able to represent the specificity of feminine sexuality, important though this is? Answered, in greater detail; in the chapters to come –which is what the research in its entirety comprises of. As a requirement to enhance and enrich the study, some paper clippings from newspapers, journals and magazines have been used without which it would be difficult to substantiate the thesis.

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[36] Margaret Whitford, 'Rereading Irigaray', in Brennan (ed.), Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis, pp. 106-26, also defends Irigaray against the charge of essentialism.

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- The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, (1984), London: Virago Press.
- 'Biography as microscope or kaleidoscope?' The case of "power" in Hannah Cullwick's relationship with Arthur Munby', (1987), Women's studies International Forum, 10:19-31.

Wittig, Monique (1980):-

- ' The straight mind', Feminist Issues, 1(1): 103-11.
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Suggestions for Further Reading

Sigmund Freud

Wright Elizabeth, Psychoanalytic Criticism, pp. 9-36.
Mitchell Juliet, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, pt. 1, pp. 5-119.

Jacques Lacan

Grosz Elizabeth, Lacan Jacques: A Feminist Introduction. A very detailed account of Lacanian theory, divided into separate topics under clear headings, with helpful summaries.

Sturrock John (ed.), Structuralism and Since contains a chapter on Lacan (pp.116-53).

Luce Irigaray

You may like to read some of Irigaray's own writing. Marks and de Courtivron (eds). New French Feminisms, contains two extracts from her work (pp. 99-110).

Grosz Elizabeth, Sexual Subversions, Contains a detailed chapter on Irigaray (pp. 100-83). Grosz, also provides a shorter but useful section on Irigaray in *Lacan Jacques*, pp. 167-83.

Mills Sara et al., Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading, provides a reading of Angela Carter's The Magic Toyshop Using Irigaray's ideas (pp. 170-86).

Helene Cixous

Extracts of Cixous's writing are also included in Belsey and Moore (eds), The Feminist Reader, pp. 101-16, and in dialogue with Catherine Clement in Mary Eagleton (ed.), Feminist Literary Criticism, pp. 110-34.

Marks and de Courtivron (eds), New French Feminisms, contains the whole of 'The Laugh of the Medusa' and an extract from 'Sorties' (pp. 90-8, 245-64).

Pronote

This chapter is concerned with exploring this complex and fascinating relationship between methodology and questions concerning the nature of feminists' knowledge and, related, with the claims that can be made for this as precisely knowledge (rather than, for example, opinion or feeling). The Researcher does so, by making four closely related arguments about feminism and methodology and exploring their ramifications.

- Debates about 'method': in the broadest sense of 'the getting of knowledge', are absolutely central to 'what feminism is about', for 'how we know what we claim to know' is the ethical and political heart of feminist thinking.
- The 'methodology debate' within feminism has been frequently misrepresented as a narrow proposal that there is a distinct and unique "feminist method", whereas, work carried out here is in fact constructing an approach which positions methodology as the central component of knowledge and so of feminist epistemology (an 'epistemology' is a theory of what knowledge is, and will be discussed in more detail later).
- Binary ways of thinking about methodology are unhelpful, while approaches which emphasise methodology as largely a matter of epistemology, play down the analytic importance of investigatory procedures which are concerned with observing, describing and explaining the social world.
- Women's studies should be concerned with the production of accountable feminist knowledge, and with encouraging real debate rather than operating the same kinds of closures as the academic mainstream.

These four arguments will be explored in the successive sections of the chapter, which begins with some observations about methodology broadly conceived.

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Chapter-1

Methodology Matters!

Introduction

What is methodology, specificity on how questions of methodology relate to the production of knowledge, doing in an introduction to women's Studies? After all, isn't methodology boring and much less important than feminist theory or the ideas of women's history or economics feminist literary criticism and so on?

Women's Studies encourages us to ask interesting and centrally important questions. What makes an idea 'feminist' or not? How can Women's Studies be taken more seriously within the academy? Why is 'gender', a concept which is easy to understand when reading about it, but difficult when it comes to understanding and changing our relationships and feelings?

Methodology is important. Methodology matters[77] because it enables us to ask, and also to begin to answer, these interesting and important questions. This is because 'a methodology' is, at its simplest, a set to linked procedures, which are adopted because they specify how to go about reaching a particular kind of analytic conclusion or goal.
Methodology matters, within feminism, because it is the key to understanding and unpacking the overlap between knowledge/power.

Re thinking as a feminist methodology:-

More specifically, the Researcher here deals with how feminist researchers read 'gender' around such documentary analysis, pointing out that the argument has relevance for the analysis and interpretation of contemporary materials as much as historical ones. The Researcher suggests that gender could be summarised as 'women lays servants and men never eat' (Stanely, 1995b). Whatever else, this is clearly a very different notion of gender definition and differences from that, which exists within Women's Studies or feminist history, or indeed more widely. The Researcher's conclusion is to the effect that what comprises "gender" is a matter of 'reading' (or hearing, or seeing): that is, it is the product of
particular interpretive frameworks

The first reference made about what the Researcher argues is 'But this isn't revolutionary!' What interests her about this is what a 'revolutionary' argument might look like: is this how an argument or statement is formulated or defined?

The problematic, the Researcher came away from this occasion which revolved around, on the one hand, how to understand gender, specifically its relationship with 'race/racism', and on the other with what can be said in the face of intellectual orthodoxies. There are questions here that interest the Researcher a good deal: how and in what ways can those of us involved in Women's Studies, gender studies or critical studies of men and masculine interpret and respond to texts as repositories or representations of sexism or misogyny or racism?

77 The chapter is concerned with methodology in the broad sense of 'procedures for investigation', and not with the uses by feminists of the range of 'methods' or specific research techniques, which are available; this latter aspect is discussed in Reinharz (1992)

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These are vignettes of the research and they play a central role to the broad ideas that the Researcher is concerned with. Both vignettes explore similar issues:

- That how to think about gender, and its interconnections with other social structural indications of systematic inter-as well as intra-generational difference, such as 'race' or class, should not be treated as self-evident;
- How these issues are thought about, and the related adoption of a particular position about the interconnections, provides a framework which signal how a 'package' of information about someone will be understood as indicating where they are to be positioned, socially, politically, intellectually and so on;
- How these issues are presented and explored (that is, the procedural or methodological approach adopted in thinking about feminist issues) is something, which matters because it affects what is understood as knowledge and who is seen to possess this knowledge.

Fundamental here, what the Researcher has so far implied rather than stated explicitly, is thinking. In discussing these matters, the Researcher has been exploring 'methodology' within a feminist frame, as it were 'from the bottom up': that is, by working from what might be termed its 'procedural fundamentals', the most basic and fundamental procedures we adopt in 'finding out' and the Researcher here has argued that thinking is the most fundamental aspects of a feminists, indeed of any and every, methodology. The Researcher will now turn to a discussion of the form in which 'feminism' and 'methodology' have been related in a more formal sense, by looking into the debate concerned with feminist methodology, which takes place within her research.

Two versions of the 'feminist methodology'

There are now a large number of journal articles, textbooks and edited collections concerned with different aspects of 'feminist methodology' and its connections with questions of method on the one hand, and issues concerning epistemology on the other. Here, Sandra Harding's (1987) influential account of the relationship between methodology and epistemology is introduced; and some problems with her emphasis on epistemology, rather than methodology, are outlined.

The first version of the 'feminist methodology' to be discussed by the Researcher here, consists of a set of writing which positions this debate in a way that concentrates upon method, and the Researcher refers to it as 'the critic' version' of this debate. The critics' version, advanced by a number of influential feminist social scientists,[38] propose that, in the later 1970s, the debate started with 'male methods' being specified by some feminist social scientists as almost synonymous with so-called 'hard' or quantified approaches (particularly the survey), and characterizes the alternative these feminists preferred, as being those methods identified as 'soft' or qualitative (particularly the unstructured in-depth interview). The first is that any notion of a 'distinct feminist method' is assumed to be both separatist and essentialist: it could only be adopted and used by, and related, because only women could be feminists. The second is that it is also treated as relativist because its concern is with the social construction of meaning, with this being seen as a denial of material reality.

38 These writings have emanated from sometimes, different kinds of feminism, but the kinds of arguments advanced overlap sufficiently to warrant being referred to as 'a set' arguing a position in a similar way. Early contributions include Barrett (1986,1987); Clegg (1985); Currie (1988); Currie and Kazi (1987); and later contributions include Abu-Lugod (1990); Game (1991); Gelsthorpe (1990); Hollway (1989); Weedon (1987). For reasons of space, these contributions are not discussed in any detail here, although they are viewed in Stanely and Wise (1993), pp.1-15 and 186-233.

There is a 'politics of location' (Rich, 1986) surrounding this critics' version of the 'feminist methodology' debate which is usefully explored here, for it pinpoints some interesting methodological issues, as well as providing a means of understanding the 'shape' or form that the debate has taken. The intellectual location from which debates and arguments are assembled and presented to the readers constitutes 'a point of view'- and the point of view or perspective of a critic is inevitably different from that of the proponent or originator. However, as Ann Oakley (1974) has noted, 'a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing', for bringing some things into focus, of course means that others stay in the background and are perceived as less (or not) salient.

The Researcher expresses an argument here by using an analytic term introduced by Adrienne Rich, 'the politics of location', and for some readers this may be taken to mean the Researcher, 'a radical feminist' of a particular kind and will hold the view and beliefs associated with such a position. However, if the Researcher had turned the frame a little and instead introduced the same kinds of ideas by reference to Donna Haraway's (1988) term of 'situated knowledge', then, for those readers familiar with this term and Haraway's work more widely, the Researcher would be perceived as a feminist of a different hue, holding different ideas and convictions.

Knowledge is a material product of particular kinds of social systems, as well as of particular 'epistemic communities'. This way of thinking about and theorizing knowledge - as something which is specific to time and place and person, is contextual, grounded and material, as well as being rooted in the 'point of view' of particular knowledge - producers who share these ideas with a group of other people who think similarly - is a fundamental construction which feminist thinking has made and is central to the Researcher's research here. It constitutes the basic aspects of a specifically feminist epistemology.

The Researcher has noted in passing above, that these ideas are basic to a 'feminist epistemology', to the way that feminism itself theorizes what 'knowledge' consists of, how it is produced and by whom, how it can be distinguished from mere opinion, and how adjudicating knowledge claims are to be investigated and by whom. But, working out from these basic ideas, different kinds or styles of feminism interpret what they mean and how they should inform methods of social investigation very differently. The Researcher now turns to explore some aspects of an alternative version of the 'same' debate, comparing the 'critics' version' with the 'feminist methodologists' version'.

The methodologists' version of the feminist methodology debate also starts with the 1970s adoption by some feminist academics of an effectively binary approach to considering methods of research, and it too perceives that there was an association of 'hard' quantified methods with men and masculinity, and 'soft' qualitative methods with women and feminism. The feminist methodologists' version, however, came into existence at the same point in time, and as a countervailing set of ideas which insisted upon the complexity of reality and corresponding need for complex and flexible methodological apparatus for understanding and analyzing it in feminist terms. Again, the main people involved in promoting this were feminist social scientists, but social scientists who did not work within structuralist paradigms such as Marxism, but insteadwithin broad interactionist terms.[39] It recognized that both researcher and subject were concerned with investigation, analyzing and theorizing the social world and people, and behaviour within it.

39 Contributions here include: Bartky (1977); Cook (1983); Cook and Fonow (1986), Daniels (1975); Eichler (1980, 1985); D Smith (1974a, 1974b, 1978, 1987); Spender (1978, 1981); Stanely and Wise (1979, 1983); Wilkinson (1986). Again, space considerations mean this work is not discussed here in any detail, although it is reviewed in Stanely (1990a) and Stanely and Wise (1990,1993).



This strand of phenomenologically - or interactionally-forced feminist writing is now not particularly well known, even though the ideas associated with it have become a part of the common currency of intellectual and academic life. However, in the 1970s things were different, and there was a widespread feminist rejection of such ideas. From the early 1980s, there was an increasing interest in analytically exploring, the varied facets of feminism. The most important ideas of this kind which are associated with this research work, within the feminist methodologists' version, are being stated below:-

(a) Knowledge is constructed from where the researcher/theoretician is situated and so feminist knowledge should proceed from the position of the feminist academic within the academy, working outwards;
(b) Academic feminism is implicated in the creation of gender binaries though the kinds of models or theories it promotes, which tend to over-dichotomise the social world;
(c) Producing accountable feminist knowledge requires analytic means of looking at the detailed processes of knowledge production;
(d) What is analytically, ethically and politically important are the broad methodological procedures, which underpin social investigation.

The work represented in this version, the feminist methodologists' version, does not argue in favour of a distinct or unique 'feminist method'[40] as the critic' version has suggested. Indeed, method in the sense of technique, is never a matter of concern for its proponents, for this approach is instead concerned with pre- uppositions (ways of seeing and understanding), methodological procedures (broad ideas about suitable approaches to investigation), and epistemological claims-making (claims about the knowledge seen as resulting from such procedures).

Standing back from the 'bones' of these two versions of the feminist methodology debate, it is striking how different they are.

Version one, 'the critics' version of the feminist methodology debate, comments upon the debate and criticizes with it, rather than being situated within it and being a part of it.

Version two, 'the feminist methodologists' version of the debate, is firmly situated within the debate, and is a central part of it. The concern here is not to criticize from the outside, but instead to expose how in feminist terms it might be possible to link 'methodological procedures' with 'epistemological presuppositions', and to do so in ways that can inform feminist research practice. The claim-making of the feminist methodologists' version focuses on the nature of knowledge as seen by feminist, and with how claims to generate and possess knowledge are 'grounded': that is, what kind of evidence, generated in what kinds of ways, and under what kinds of research circumstance, is seen as 'necessary' and 'sufficient'. It has also pointed out that feminist knowledge claims; there are no grounds for assuming that 'feminist knowledge' is by definition, and a priori, preferable, and it should be subject to the same kinds of critical enquiries, including by feminists as other kinds of knowledge claim to make.

Does the difference between these two contrasting versions of the feminist methodology debate matter? However, the difference does matter because it has consequences for what 'the research' here is seen to consist of and to be about, and also the kinds of evaluations that are made, of work produced within it:

40 Shulamit Reinharz (1979) has been the main proponent of notion of a distinct feminist method although, curiously, she has almost never been referenced.

a. because version one is formulated as a critique, as a critics' version which emphasizes problems and weaknesses, this puts the ideas and arguments of version two, the feminist methodologists' version, in a subordinate position: being commented on and found wanting;
b. Nonetheless, the critics' version claims the right to evaluate ideas and to treat contrary views as wrong.

Marx and Engels in the German Ideology (1970) referred to the process as the production of ideology, while Dorothy Smith (1974b) has termed it the 'ideological three-step', which first, abstracts a few aspects of an argument, second, treats these as though they are related and also the whole of the argument, and third, then criticizes the argument for being simplistic. The critics' version, version one, operates a closure device: it inhibits proper debate by associating 'opponents', the proponents of version two, with extremism, separatism and essentialism; and then in turn, helps to create and maintain a hierarchy of knowledge and knows, and thus of power relations within academic feminism.

So far in this section of the chapter, the Researcher has provided an account of the 'feminist methodology' debate by looking at two of the difficult positions within this, and the Researcher has also argued that the debate itself has methodological aspects and consequences. Methodology matters are not optional: they are central to discussions of epistemology, ethics and politics, for they provide the grounding for what we think, but also how we think it, how we proceed to go about the business of finding out and thus of knowing, and they also specify the relationship that exists between different and competing positions.

On account of 'the feminist methodology' it is worth outlining Sandra Harding's (1987) discussion.

(a) 'method' in the sense of a specific technique such as a survey, interview or ethnography;
(b) 'methodology' in the sense of a theory or conceptualization; and
(c) 'epistemology' in the sense of a theory of knowledge.

Harding's discussion starts by rejecting what she perceives as the emphasis on 'feminist method'. This demonstrates the impact of the critics' version of the debate over and against that of the feminist methodologist, who, as the Researcher has discussed, have actually been concerned with questions of methodology and epistemology, and not those of method. Harding's work too is concerned mainly with epistemology, and she outlines what she sees as the three main epistemological positions within academic feminism, positions which, come into existence in the following order of development in the research here:

(a) 'successor science' – a foundationalist form of feminism which is concerned with investigating and presenting 'real science' not from masculinist assumptions and ways of working;
(b) 'standpoint' – an approach concerned to investigate and theorise the social world 'from the standpoint of women'; and
(c) 'post-modern' – an epistemology which rejects the idea that there is a 'real reality' independent of interpretation. This is why the Researcher titles her thesis as 'Feminism, Femininity and Reality- a Related Trio…..?' *(*Deconstruction Through Language*)*

There is the temptation to think that this is how feminists actually understand and theorise knowledge 'on the ground'.[41] Second, the ideas and approach described as 'post-

41 As the Researcher and Sue Wise (1990) have argued, these are not accurate even as a depiction of those feminists whose work is seen as providing a paradigm instance of such positions (for example, regarding Dorothy Smith and the 'feminist standpoint').

modern' and a late arrival on the scene, were actually central to version two, the methodologists' version of the feminist methodology debate, and which indeed were a large part of why it was so dismissively criticized by the critics. And third, both version one, the critics' version, and version two, the methodologists' version, contain elements of all three of the epistemological ideas which Harding divides up and the Researcher allocates them to mutually-exclusive 'boxes' within her model.

The Researcher's particular interest in it here is thus concerned with her discussion of method and methodology as derivative of epistemology and therefore to be 'bracketed' (safely placed on one side) while the 'real question' for feminism of epistemology is considered. This is certainly a plausible argument,t as for the Researche,r methodology is a term which corresponds with the social science notion of 'perspective': a theory which contains within it a specification of how the theory is to be applied in particular grounded research areas. However, the Researcher sees it here as a set of linked 'procedural', or 'operational' elements which provide the grounding for 'investigation', in the broad sense; the Researcher has used the term that has been used at the start of the chapter. The Researcher's emphasis has hence been upon these operational procedures 'for investigating', and with looking at how these link together epistemological presuppositions with what are deemed satisfactory procedures for establishing knowledge. Harding's emphasis is, in contrast, upon the conceptual aspects.

Harding's approach rejects 'method' as a sphere of analytic attention; and it shifts feminist analytic attention away from methodological procedures for investigation, and towards epistemological concerns. However, the Researcher's approach here, foregrounds methodological procedures as analytically crucial for feminism in their own sight, because they can provide the rounds for producing accountable feminist knowledge. Focusing on actual methodology', through a detailed analytic exploration of the phenomenology of emergent feminist consciousness within particular grounded research contexts, can make much clearer – and so make available for scrutiny by others – the grounds of the knowledge claims that feminist researchers make. The Researcher thus goes on to discuss the importance of this in the next section of the chapter.

Accountable feminist knowledge

In discussing this, The Researcher returns to the idea of 'accountable feminist knowledge'. There are three main areas of enquiry in her reference within methodology in this sense:

(a) Observation;
(b) Description;
(c) Explanation.

Within social sciences and philosophy, the weight of scrutiny is generally placed on the first and last of these, but it is the second description which raises the most complex and interesting issues as well as those most germane to the notion of accountable feminist knowledge.

The notion of accountable feminist knowledge builds on 'situated knowledge' and related insights drawn from the methodologists' version, if the feminist methodology debate.

In conventional ideas about research, the act of observation is interpreted in terms of research methods or techniques, as being self-evidently what these methods 'capture'. However, as Harvey Sacks (1963) pointed out many years ago, the literal description of social events is not possible, any more than description can exist in a one-to-one referential

relationship to that which it purports to describe. In thinking about the third component of methodology referred to above - explanation - and its relationship to description, 'an explanation' consists of three closely related formal elements:

(a) the 'explans', or premises of the explanation;
(b) the 'explanadum', or the thing to be explained; and
(c) the conclusion itself.

Whichever way we approach it, description assumes central place as the site for enquiry of methodology matters.

If we want to produce accountable feminist knowledge, then, we need to take account of the issue involved in its 'description'. What status do feminist deconstructions of the social world currently have, including for those whose lives we research? In a project where a feminist meeting was recorded and then transcribed (Poland, 1990), some of the participants insist that the 'literal words' didn't actually describe what had taken place. What does 'accountable feminist knowledge' look like here? In fact the researcher here chooses to discuss the issues involved and to emphasize how complex these matters are, a complexity which is often hidden because researchers deal in generalities rather in discussing in detail, concrete issues of interpretation.

Tying together some of these issues and complexities, these seem to be a number of key elements to 'accountability' within feminist researcher, all of them 'methodological'.

(a) The provision of retrievable data;
(b) The detailed specification of the analytic procedures involved; and
(c) The in-depth discussion of the interpretive acts that 'findings' and 'conclusions'.

In a sense, then, retrievable data requires that feminist texts not only 'stick to the data', but also present the data that they stick to, and this is as much true for 'theoretical writing' as it is for 'researcher accounts'.

When the researcher's acts of interpretation are provided in detail, step by step, then readers can unravel the interpretive procedures. An 'open text' permits feminist knowledge to become considerably more accountable by enabling readers to interrogate and evaluate the analysis made of the evidence provided.

Of course, this is a very brief and schematic account of what 'accountable feminist knowledge' might look like. Consequently, it also emphasizes that for those feminist researchers who are concerned with the issues of accountability, this cannot be reduced to any simple formula of 'taking the researcher back'; as the researcher has noted, even 'the words themselves' do not necessarily settle the kinds of interpretational complexities involved. It is because the women's studies pours materials address the experience of women in our society. Moreover the teacher's of women's studies it is new personally relevant discipline. Women Studies is not an isolated study. On the contrary it is closely connected with the women's movement, which is a dynamic social force. Feminist process, manifested academically as women's studies creates the potential for a fulfilling learning experience.

Role of Feminist Methodology in This Research:-

Rerate Duelli Klin points out that until recently feminist methodology, as a topic of its own had not given much consideration. Many books and articles on the development of feminist scholarship focus on its new content rather than its methodology. Moreover, though the need for feminist theory has been widely recognized, feminist methodology does not as yet get nearly as much attention.

All those engaged in research from a feminist perspective agree that the choice of the research topic – the 'what' to investigate – must come prior to the decision of 'how' to go about doing women's research. This "male god" method has wiped out women's questions, so

totally that women have not been able to hear and formulate their own questions to meet there over experiences.

After deciding about the research project, the choice of methodology will inevitably come. The words 'Feminist and Methodology' need clear explanations at this juncture.

Feminist implies assuming a perspective in which women's experiences, ideas and needs are valid in their given right and androcentricity – 'Man' as the norm ceases to be the only recognized frame of reference for human beings. Methodology means the doing of feminist research and also the choice of appropriate technique for this process. Though the term methodology is used in the singular it is not to suggest that we work towards the one and only correct feminist methodology. Actually, the feminist methods can and must differ according to the specific circumstances of our research projects. Feminist methodology is imperative for the doing of feminist research, if we want to put our feminist theories into practice. Moreover, a feminist methodology can help us to validate emerging feminist theory and indicate the need for modifications. This characteristic of feminist methodology has helped the researcher a great deal, for it is through its lens that she has been capable of deconstructing literary figurative, providing a gender sensitized infrastructure to the modus-operandi. She adopts to explain history as his–story **(sins of commission and sins of omission)**. This process avoids the new feminist scholarship from becoming static, rigid and dogmatic. This might also prevent women studies from becoming 'just another academic discipline'.

Feminist research here, has uncovered a large number of misconceptions about women's bodies, mental capacities and achievements. It has engaged itself in re-examining certain basic concepts like femininity, sexuality, media distortions, deconstruction and feminism in its totality with reality repercussions.

This Feminist research is primarily a research on and with women, as it explains how individual and collective women's lives are constrained by the actions of men either socially or through literature (literarily).

Qualitative methods are used than quantitative ones, although there is still a debate as whether to adopt qualitative approaches to understand women lives as against quantitative methods of enquiry. The ultimate motto is to deconstruct to construct, in order to direct itself towards that kind of a social change that questions devaluation of women recognizes women's disguised discrimination in literature, attempting to provide strategies in getting equality against injustice to women. As one of the first feminist manifestations, this kind of research paves way for action research and advocacy researchers.

Sandralee Bartky says, "Women experiences of politics, and of life as sex object, gives rise to its own method of appropriating that reality." **(A Reality, subjective and questioned in this thesis)**.

Manifesting this ideology (as mentioned above) the researcher argues that women may be empowered personally though three ways:

- Through their contribution to make visible a social issue.
- Through therapeutic effects, of being able to reflect on and revalidate.
- Through their experience as part of the process of being studied and analyzed to formulate the final synthesis.

The feminist researcher here is interdisciplinary and unifying, in her research's evolving stage:

- It teaches skills in critical analysis.
- It assumes problem-solving stance.
- It promotes socially useful ends and involves most part multidisciplinary approach in practice.

- It depends largely on secondary sources for inferential analysis.
- It becomes a means of sharing experiences/information and not simply a source of data.
- It is concerned to record the subjective experience of doing research.
- It relies on its political nature and potential to bring out changes in women's lives, ultimately towards empowerment of women, questioning through deconstruction the entire phenomena of sexual politics revolving around a woman's sexuality, femininity and tranquility imposed on her by the patriarchs.

Arlene Kaplan Daniel demonstrates that most of the feminist research is focused entirely on women because of the fact that the female interests have not been previously explored. This is exactly why the researcher here makes her research truly feminist – in mind, body and soul.

For Renate Duelli Klein, the wish to explore proper methodology for feminist research came in the year, 1979 when she was working on the attitudes of young women towards feminism. Renate clearly points out that a considerable amount of the so called feminist scholarship of previous years had not contributed to women's visibility in a feminist frame of reference but instead continued to perpetuate the male dominance. This kind of a research is a 'research on women' rather than a research for women. This thesis has catapulted a research for women that tries to take women's needs, interests and experience into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women's lives in one way or another. Renate Klein is of the opinion that research on women is often conducted without careful examination of the suitability of the methods used for feminist scholarship, and the researchers do not state why they choose a particular method and what problem occurred during the research project.

Thus, although in the last decade, women scholars have produced an enormous body of knowledge on women in society, psychology, history, etc, much of this research consists of duplicating traditional research. Answers are evaluated about women against male standards. Such research perpetuates a view of women from an androcentric perspective.

This kind of knowledge is produced for the sake of knowledge rather that with the desire to put the knowledge into practice to induce changes. But if our research should contribute to 'women' as liberation, then we have to sensitize our methods more carefully to see if they are in fact congruent with our feminist principles. Thus, the claim by the researcher here, that her research is conducted with a feminist perspective, can be made laudible, for the methods applied, do take women's experiences into account, though these experiences vary depending on cultural identification, ethnicity, social status, age, sexual preference period of the research etc. Feminist research here hence rejects the traditional interpretation of course, with out affecting the basic standards of any conventional research methods.

According to Adrienne Rich, 'objectivity' in research is the term that men have given a name to their own subjectivity – male subjectivity as research objectivity. An important factor that has been ignored so far in most research on women is the phenomena of 'faking'. This kind of faking is necessary for the psychological survival of many women because without faking reality would seem unbearable, while the traditional research tries to eliminate faking by using 'tricks' when asking questions, the researcher here considers acknowledging and incorporating faking into her research methods. The significance of faking may become very important for the concept of feminist research.

Maria Mies, a German social scientist points out a few other characteristics of feminist methodology. The outcome of this investigation of a group of battered women went beyond a mere academic report on the conditions of battered women.

The subjective experience of each of the participating women, were not looked upon as research objects but as 'sisters' -εs subjects. The researcher here attempts to deconstruct by being a sensitive reader, by getting into the shoes of the writer/ the author she analyses, may it be male or female. This is done in three stages:

- **Initiate**
- **Identify and**
- **Imbibe**

Maria West Kott 1979 defines such a directional relationship between the subject and object of research as under subjectivity and whenever possible, feminist methodology should allow for such inter subjectivity. The theory and practice of women's experience is not split.

According to Sandra Harding, a researcher should carefully listen to the women as they explain their lives and also the lives of men. All the problems of the women should be taken into account. Moreover, a feminist seeks explanations of newly recognized patterns as historical data.

The women's experiences constitute the new resources for study, which are not difficult to grasp. Care should be taken to identity all the problem areas of women. The purpose for which the research is undertaken is equally important area of feminist research. The main purpose of a feminist research is to supply an answer to women who come out with varying questions associated with their exploitation. A feminist researcher must always empower women. This research becomes very significant to the extent that a new subject matter is chosen and the researcher here comes close to women while the traditional disciplines urged the women to suppress their emotions' subjectivity and feeling of involvement.

The researcher has distinguished three kinds of feminist research on the basis of the nature, purpose and scope of her research activity. They are **Muckrakcing, Corrective and Movement Oriented**. Muckracking examines the shortcoming of the institutional sexism by simply publicizing them, and stops with that end.

Corrective kind of feminist research is largely descriptive and is concerned with filling in gaps in the knowledge about women, rightly implemented by the Researcher in her research.

Movement oriented is designed and conducted in the service of women's liberation movement, and that too by women only. This demands a greater commitment on the part of the researcher. More so, the diversification that Deconstruction entails is voluminous, specially areas governing it. The Researcher has hence deliberately chosen language, that is with specific reference to literature, in order to avoid volume and render specificity and clarity.

This indicates that there are no generalized and uniform objectives for feminist research. Feminist research is in other words called Sex Role Research.

Collection Methods and Procedures of Data:

The study consisted of the following methods used to gather information, experience and literary theories of deconstruction, review's of different author's on subjects of feminism, femininity, sexuality, psychoanalysis ……from literature at large, referring to author's like Lacan, Simone, Freud, Focault, Derrida, Woolf….. etc.

- Efforts were made to get latest books on the subject of research to get updated information.
- To use internet as a source of information on literature specially for collateral references.

Aims and Objectives of the Research:-

The present work attempts to deal in full detail, with the concepts of Feminism, Femininity and Reality. The specific objective of the study are as follows:-

- To attempt a clear and in detailed understanding of each of the above-mentioned concepts, with a view of their application to changing position of women.
- To delineate and define the terms Feminism and Femininity.
- To understand the constraints and challenges of Feminist thought at various levels, both in literature and society.
- To examine the implications of the distortions of the trio reiterated in literature by the patriarchs.
- To understand and analyze the various dimensions of gender discriminations in view of Feminism, Femininity and Literature.
- To identify and relate the fact that women's writing is distinct from that of the man.
- To analyse in detail, with examples, the fact that, difference of experience definetly results in difference of expression.
- To use the contributions and work of the feminist writers (both male and female) to illustrate and delineate the fact that, women though competent, are always subdued.
- To substantiate through the theory of deconstruction, that man ceases to function as 'window to the world', for the woman, even if a writer.
- To identify and question the need for an alternative discourse for women.
- To forsee a situation where language is used to relate the experiences and expressions of both men and women impartially.

Scope, Need and Purpose of the Study:-

It is for an artistic advantage, that one avails and the little understanding among people as with regard to feminism, femininity and reality that has led to the need for the present study. There is need for greater clarity as to the meaning and relevance of these terms to an understanding of Gender issues in underdeveloped and developing nations. The mass media has a crucial role in orienting people towards sustainable change through its agencies. But, tragically enough, they are presenting a distorted or subverted image of feminist ideology/theme as with reference to Feminism, Femininity and Reality.

The uniqueness of this research is in a deliberate rethought, as it renders to these forgotten concepts mentioned above, and also making an earnest endeavour into logically delineating the complete Feminist movement lucidly and explicitly implying its relativity to the central concepts of research.

The study proposes to contribute to a simple but an overlooked fact that it is not enough to simply ask for a Woman's Equality Vis-à-vis the Man in her community. This topic is exciting, precisely because it is a challenging one, into reviewing, redefining and changing the most intimate of the relationships, the most personal of belief, the most unarticulated areas of our minds and hearts.

Hypothesis:-

The Researcher has postulated her observation based on the following hypothesis-

This research does offer new empirical evidence about Feminism, its link to Femininity and how these extensions get genderized, both in society and literature. The societal degradation of women is well known, but how these concepts can enable an individual to deconstruct theories, images, language and contexts to figuratively identify literary

oppression of women, both as a writer and a reader, are seldom taken to be a matter of importance and of concern. This main pivot on which the entire research is built is perceived through the window of deconstruction theory. All the facets that make women, are questioned, for women are, and should be taken for what they are and not for what they are made to be ....! Though the oppression of women is indeed a material reality, a matter of motherhood, domestic labour, job discrimination and unequal wages, it cannot be reduced to these factors; it is also a question of sexual ideology, of the ways men and women image themselves and each other in male-dominated society, of perceptions and behaviour which range from the brutally explicit to the deeply unconscious. Any politics which failed to place such issues at the heart of its theory and practice was likely to find itself consigned to the dustheap of history. Because sexism and gender roles are questions which engage the deepest personal dimensions of human life, a politics which was blind to the experience of the human subject was crippled from the outset. The movement from structuralism to post-structuralism and the resulting theory of deconstructionism was in a part a response to these political demands. Of course it is untrue that the women's movement has a monopoly of 'experience', as is sometimes implied: what else has socialism been but the bitter hopes and desires of many millions of men and women over the generations, who lived and sometimes died in the name of something rather more than a 'doctrine of the totality' or the primacy of the economic? Nor is it adequate to identify the personal and political: that the personal is political is profoundly true, but there is an important sense in which the personal is also personal and the political political. Political struggle cannot be reduced to the personal, or vice versa – explicitly analysed and explained by the researcher in the chapters to come.

Limitations of the Study:-

- This research does not claim to be qualitatively exhaustive. The researcher has only looked at those books, newspapers, magazines and journals that have been easily and readily available.
- The Research constitutes of only those illustrations, excerpts and references that are required to prove her point, though they may stimulate more thought, research and action (primary) in the area covered.

Methodological Guidelines For Feminist Research

The following give the detailed account of the guidelines for the present feminist research.

- The postulate of value free research towards the research objects is replaced by conscious partiality. It is the opposite of the so-called 'spectacular knowledge'.
- The vertical relationship between the Researcher and research objects, that is 'the view from above', is replaced by 'view from below'.
- The contemplative uninvolved spectator knowledge is replaced by active participation in actions, making research no longer restricted to the ivory tower of research institutes and universities thus blunting the edge of all its content. To avert this danger, the Researcher has closely attempted to link feminism as a backdrop to the theory of deconstruction.
- The research process has thus become, a process of concentration both for the so-called research subjects (social scientist and for the research objects) and women as target groups. It means that the study becomes result oriented to the extent that the objects of the Researcher become subjects of their own research and action.

Conclusion

Are conclusions to methodology matters possible?

Of course, what is 'accountable feminist knowledge' should be a matter for debate. However, a real debate about feminist methodology has not yet happened for the reasons outlined earlier, and in particular because of the use of binaries to produce acts of closure by mis/representing contrary positions, and through positioning critics hegemonically, as 'the knowers' of methodology matters within feminism. There can be no 'conclusion' in this sense to this chapter, because it is not yet clear even what the basic terms and issues of the 'feminist methodology' debate should be, or what kinds of evidence and procedures would be deemed necessary to reach such a settlement. In point of fact, everything methodological remains at issue, which makes this a singularly interesting as well as crucially important area of feminist intellectual activity.

The Researcher has argued here, that methodology is 'where the action is', analytically speaking and consequently, that there is a need to take considerably more seriously 'how we do what we do' within Women's studies. This chapter has proposed, that methodology matters within feminism, and indeed, that there is no 'beyond methodology' possible (Fonow and Cook, 1991). Without methodology we cannot think, indeed we cannot be; beyond methodology there is death, silence, the end.

The Way ahead:

The present research can claim for its unique space and place as an indispensable academic contribution to the university for the following areas it highlights and opens up ……

1. Re-locating and restructuring women through feminism implying the theory of deconstruction with the backdrop of literature/language - aiming to identify its fountainhead in the political and cultural context of sexuality.
2. By engaging in creating intellectual opinion on issues which safeguard:
   - justice;
   - the interests of the women penalized on ground of femininity, as writers
   - the interests of as readers relating to the **'reader - response'** theory and finally
   - provides an environment for the affirmation of women's political, economic and human rights, either socially or in literature.

If women's agenda could be delimited, and at the same time, a unified voice of women would become a voice for some issue of justice, then there would be a response that this research and its deconstruction would unleash, and that is a vision and ethic.

Limitations

There is work to be done in two major areas.

i. Providing information to the women's movement on the more detailed facts, figures and arguments on feminism, political economy, "global" forces and the international system.

ii. On the other hand, there is the need to make the political consciousness of women, especially the mass based political consciousness of women more "feminist". Women elected through the Panchayati Raj elections have a sense of self worth, a sense of identity as women.

There is hence, a need for information, counselling, and deep participation of the researcher's implying feminist methodology in its true sense and being a feminist scholar from deep within his/her heart.

Further Reading

- A highly influential reader, the introduction of which is concerned with 'method, methodology and epistemology' and especially epistemology. The contributing chapters offer examples of the different feminist epistemological positions reviewed earlier by Harding: successor science, standpoint and post-modern.

- A set of articles which debate the nature of feminist methodology, with Hammersley seeing this as both a search for a 'feminist method' and the source of an anti-reason bias, while Ramazonoglu emphasizes the ways in which this argument is in fundamental opposition to feminist tenets about the masculinism of how 'reason' and 'science' are understood. Gelsthorpe argues that experience and reason are not polarized in the ways suggested, and William points out that, contrary to Hammersley's insistence on uniformity, feminist response to questions of methodology are considerably more diverse and contain a range of positions concerning reflexivity, power and knowledge.

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Pronote

This chapter is about the development of feminism as a theory, of feminist ideas, history of feminism and the social procedures involved in its growth and acceptance.

Whilst acknowledging the heterogeneity of feminist approaches and feminism within society and the important challenges posed by sexual politics, disability feminine psychoanalysis and race, it is possible to identify a number of new dimensions and perspectives, that feminism in general brings forth. In other words, this chapter examines the specifics of the relationship and the impact of feminism over women and their liberation.

The Researcher feels a necessity of this chapter, for it offers the very background to her research on deconstruction of language to reinterpret concepts like femininity, sexuality, feminine psychoanalysis, literature and feminism itself. It is only the theory of feminism that has enabled the researcher to deconstruct, may it be a concept, a text, a movement or a phenomena…….!

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Chapter-2

The Feminist Theory-Capital F, Capital T….!

What is Feminism ?

There are many, feminist and non-feminist alike, for whom the question 'what is feminism?' has little meaning. The content of terms like 'feminism' and 'feminist' seems self-evident, something that can be taken for granted. It has become an obstacle to understanding feminism, in its diversity and in its differences, and in its specificity as well[42].

It is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of feminism and the feminist, which can be shared by feminists and non-feminists. Feminist is someone who holds that woman suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order.

For example, popular approaches to feminism often contain references to a style of dress, to looks, to ways of behaving to men and women, to what used to be called 'manners'. It is, in practice, impossible to discuss feminism without discussing the image of feminism and the feminists. Feminists play and have played with a range of choices in the process of self-presentation, registering a relation both to the body and to the social meaning of womanhood. Various, sometimes competing, images of the feminist are thus produced, and these acquire their own social meanings. This is important to stress now, because in contemporary feminism, the construction of new images is a conscious process. Mary Wollstonecraft at the end of the eighteenth century, called for 'a revolution in female manners'.
The diversity of representations of the feminist, has undoubtedly grown since then. In the woman's movement, there is a strong desire to pin feminism down (whether as support for a series of agreed demands or as preoccupation with central concerns like sexual division or male domination) but this impulse has invariably encountered obstacles.

Indeed, the history of the woman's movement in the 1970s, a time of apparent unity, was marked by bitter, at time virulent, internal disputes over what it was possible or permissible for a feminist to do, say, think or feel.

The fragmentation of contemporary feminism bears ample witness to the impossibility of constructing modern feminism as a simple unity in the present or of arriving at a shared feminist definition of feminism.

Instead of internal dialogue there is a naming of the parts: there are radical feminists, socialist feminists, Marxist feminist, lesbian separatists, women of colour, and so on, each group with its own carefully preserved sense of identity.

All cats look grey in the dark, and the exclusivism of feminist groups can be

42 Parts of this article were included in a paper given to the London History workshop Seminar in April 1983. Due thanks to all those who participated in the discussion, which followed, and all those who have discussed the various themes of this article. Special thanks are due to Beatrix Campbell, Catherine Hall, Juliet Mitchell, Mike and Ines Newman, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Brenda Storey.

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There are many, feminist and non-feminist alike, for whom the question 'what is feminism?' has little meaning. The content of terms like 'feminism' and 'feminist' seems self-evident, something that can be taken for granted. It has become an obstacle to understanding feminism, in its diversity and in its differences, and in its specificity as well[42].

It is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of feminism and the feminist, which can be shared by feminists and non-feminists. Feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order.

For example, popular approaches to feminism often contain references to a style of dress, to looks, to ways of behaving to men and women, to what used to be called 'manners'. It is, in practice, impossible to discuss feminism without discussing the image of feminism and the feminists. Feminists play and have played with a range of choices in the process of self-presentation, registering a relation both to the body and to the social meaning of womanhood. Various, sometimes competing, images of the feminist are thus produced, and these acquire their own social meanings. This is important to stress now, because, in contemporary feminism, the construction of new images is a conscious process. Mary Wollstonecraft at the end of the eighteenth century, called for 'a revolution in female manners'.
The diversity of representations of the feminist, has undoubtedly grown since then. In the women's movement, there is a strong desire to pin feminism down (whether as support for a series of agreed demands or as preoccupation with central concerns like sexual division or male domination) but this impulse has invariably encountered obstacles.

Indeed, the history of the women's movement in the 1970s, a time of apparent unity, was marked by bitter, at time virulent, internal disputes over what it was possible or permissible for a feminist to do, say, think or feel.

The fragmentation of contemporary feminism bears ample witness to the impossibility of constructing modern feminism as a simple unity in the present or of arriving at a shared feminist definition of feminism.

Instead of internal dialogue there is a naming of the parts: there are radical feminists, socialist feminists, Marxist feminist, lesbian separatists, women of colour, and so on, each group with its own carefully preserved sense of identity.

All cats look grey in the dark, and the exclusivism of feminist groups can be

42 Parts of this article were included in a paper given to the London History workshop Seminar in April 1983. Due thanks to all those who participated in the discussion, which followed, and all those who have discussed the various themes of this article. Special thanks are due to Beatrix Campbell, Catherine Hall, Juliet Mitchell, Mike and Ines Newman, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Brenda Storey.

reminiscent of what Freud called 'the narcissism of minor differences'.[43] Indeed, one, unlooked-for effect of an assumed coherence of feminism, can be its marginalization, as discourse or as practice[44]. 'Does feminism have any necessary unity, politically, socially, or culturally?'
At the start of the contemporary women's movement in Britain, it was often assumed that there was potentially unificatory point of view on women's issues, which would be able to accommodate divergences and not be submerged by them. From the start the modern women's movement pitched its appeal at a very high level of generality, to all women, and thought of its aims and objectives in very general terms.

The unity of the movement was assumed to derive from a potential identity between women. A shared response to shared experience was put forward as the basis for a communality of feeling between women, a shared psychology even. Women's politics and women's organizing were then seen as an expression of this.

So unproblematically was potential identity, community of feeling and experience[45] between women assumed, that the plural form 'we' was adopted, and it is still much used: 'we', women, can speak on behalf of all of us 'women'.[46]

In fact, common ground within women's politics was based on an agreed description rather than an analysis, and the absence of analysis probably enabled such a stress to be laid on what women in general could share. No one predicated (or could predict) that uncontainable divisions would arise between and within women's groups.[47] Analytic differences and the political differences, which spring from them, have regularly been causes

43 'Of two neighboring towns, each is the other's most jealous rival; every little canton looks down on the others with contempt. Closely related races keep one another at arm's length; the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese,' Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the analysis of the Ego, (Standard Edition, Vol 18, Hogarth, London, 1958), 101. See also Civilization and its Discontents, ch. V (Vol 21 of the same edition).

44 This can happen in both politics and culture. One example is the creation of 'feminist art' as a category within art criticism into which the work of many women artists is conveniently slotted. Far from focusing attention on the work of those artists who are feminists, such a label removes their art practice to the margins, and forecloses the question of whether such a thing as 'feminist art' exists. For a discussion of feminist art practice see Mary Kelly, 'Desiring Images/Imaging Desire' in Wedge, *6* (New York, 1984).

45 This point of view was expressed, for example, in the London Women's London Liberation Workshop Manifesto, drafted in 1970 by a group of London women as the basis of their work together. Part of it read: 'Women's Liberation Workshop believes that women in our society are oppressed. We are economically oppressed; in jobs we do full work for half pay, at home we do unpaid work full time. The manifesto was circulated as a cyclostyled sheet to all those interested in the workshop and was published monthly in its magazine Shrew.

46 I', a 'we' which annexes to the "I" an indistinct globality of other persons', Emile Benveniste, problemes This 'we' is reminiscent of what Benveniste calls this 'dilated de Linguistique Generale (Gallimard, Paris 1966), 235.

47 Indeed, the workshop manifest stressed heterogeneity: 'Women's Liberation Workshop is essentially heterogeneous, incorporating within it a wide range of opinions and plans for action.

of division in the women's movement.[48] What has been most difficult for the women's movement to cope with has been the plethora of differences between women, which have emerged in the context of feminism.
Recognition of, and commitment to heterogeneity appear to have been lost, and with those a source of fruitful tension. A further aspect of the same paradox is that the different forms of women's politics, fragmented as they are, have been increasingly called by the same name: feminism. Even the term that signifies its rejection – 'post-feminism' – incorporates it.

Women's organizing was not, in general, in the late sixties and early seventies, called 'feminism'. Feminism was a position adopted, by or ascribed to particular groups. The equation between women organizing and feminism has been implicitly adopted since then, and its usage, as a blanket term to cover all women's activities urgently needs to be questioned.
Are all actions and campaigns prompted or led by women, feminist? The symbolism deployed at Greenham calls up images of the female and the feminine: the spider's web of the support network, the nurturing maternity which leaves its marks of family photographs and knitted bootees on the boundary fence in a battle for space with the symbols of male defense and attack: barbed wire, the nuclear missile. Support for Greenham does not rely in the main on feminist groups (although it does rely on women). Without a women's movement, a women's peace camp would probably not have had so much resonance; this is part of the success of the women's movement, but does not make Greenham necessarily feminist.

The politics of Greenham has been keenly debated among feminists. For some, the mobilization of femininity and nurturance is expressive of feminism, for others its represents a deference to that social construction of woman as maternal principle, which through their feminism, they attempt to challenge.[49] Not only does Greenham represent different things to different feminists, summoning up different meanings of feminism, it is by no means certain that those who participate in Greenham politics, or support the camp, would describe themselves as feminist.
Within contemporary feminism, much emphasis has been laid on feminism as consciousness. One of the most distinctive practices of modern feminism has been the 'consciousness-raising group'. If feminism is the result of reflection and conscious choice, how does one place those individuals and women's groups who would, for a variety of reasons, reject the description 'feminist' if it were applied to them? What, in the framework provided by 'feminist consciousness', is then the status of this 'unconscious' feminism?

If feminism is a concern with issues affecting women, a concern to advance women's interest, so that, anyone who shares this concern, is a feminist, whether they acknowledge it or not, then range of feminism is general, and its meaning is equally diffuse. Feminism, becomes defined by its object of concern – Women – in much the same way as socialism has sometimes been defined by an object – the poor or the working class. This way of looking at feminism, as diffuse activity, makes feminism understandably hard to pin down.

48 For Example, the statement that women in the home 'do unpaid work full time' is one that could be agreed by all supporters of the Manifesto. The analysis that this hidden labour (hidden from the point of view of capital) is the secret of capital's exploitation of women and that therefore there should be a campaign for wages for housework in order to reclaim its value, was highly contentious and never gained more than minority backing.

49 For discussions of Greenham Common see Caroline Blackwood, On the Perimeter (Heinemann, London/Viking, NY, 1984; Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk, Greenham Women Everywhere (Pluto Press, London/The South End Press, Boston, 1983); Lynne Jones (ed.), Keeping the Peace (The Women's Press, London 1983); and Breaching the peace conference papers by a group of radical feminists (Only women Press, London, 1983).

On the other hand, there are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists. This means that it should be possible to separate out feminism and feminists from the multiplicity of those concerned with women's issues. It is by no means absurd to suggest that you don't have to be a feminist to support women's rights to equal treatment, and that not all those supportive of women's demands are feminists. In this light, feminism can claim its own history, its own practices, its own ideas, but feminists can make no claim to an exclusive interest in or copyright over problems affecting women. Feminism can thus be established as a field (and this even if skepticism is still needed in the face of claims or demands for a unified feminism), but cannot claim women as its domain.

These considerations, both have political implications in the present, and also underlie the way feminism's past is understood. If a history of feminism, separable from although connected with the history of changes in women's position, is to be constructed, a precondition of such a history is that feminism must be able to be specified.

In the writing of feminist history, it is the broad view, which predominates: feminism is usually defined as an active desire to change women's position in society.[50] Linked to this is the view that feminism is par excellence, a social movement for change in the position of women. Its privileged form is taken to be the political movement, the self-organization of a women's politics. So unquestioningly are feminism and a women's movement assumed to be co-terminous that histories of feminism are often written as histories of the women's movement, and times of apparent quiescence of the movement are taken as symptomatic of a quiescence of feminism. The idea that the new movement of the 1960s was a 'second wave', a continuation of a struggle started just over a century before and interrupted for forty years (after the hiatus of the vote) pervaded the early years of the contemporary women's movement and still informs many of its debates.[51] The way feminism's past is understood and interpreted, thus informs and is informed by the ways in which feminism is understood and interpreted in the present.

The problems involved in writing feminist history, throw into relief, some of the problems involved in specifying feminism more closely in the present. Feminist historiography highlights different versions of feminism, since it often has overt political motivations, which then produce different versions of the same history. Present approaches to feminist history can themselves be historicized by comparison with the ways in which past feminists have read their own histories. Even the frustrating assumption of identity between feminism and the women's movement, has its advantages: it focuses attention on the area where feminism is most intimately intertwined with a generality of concern with women's issues: women's politics.

Some of the major conventions of the writing of feminist history, which are only in recent years being questioned and overturned, can be found in the classic history of the nineteenth-century movement: Ray Strachey's The Cause.[52] Her main concern was to chart

50 Professor Olive Banks, for example, employs this broad definition: 'Any group that has tried to change the position of women, or ideas about women, has been granted the title feminist' in her Faces of Feminism (Martin Robertson, Oxford 1981), 3.

51 'In the radical feminist view, the new feminism is not just the revival of a serious political movement for social equality. It is the second wave of the most popular revolution in history', Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (Cape, London, 1971), 16. The Second Wave was also the name of a US radical feminist journal. It is a phrase, which is still used.

52 Ray Strachey, The Cause (Bell, London, 1928; reprinted Virago, London 1978).

the period between 1860 and 1920 during which the term feminism took on its dictionary definition, 'advocacy of the claims of women'.[53] It is also the product of a feminism, which did not (unlike much contemporary feminism) define itself as 'woman-made' (it would be difficult to write a history of nineteenth-century feminism which did not include at least J. S. Mill and Richard Pankhurst). A detailed look at this work will help clarify how some of the questions raised so far relate to the writing of feminist history.

History Conventions

When Ray Strachey wrote her close connection between feminism and the social movement for change in women's position was redolent with meaning: the term 'feminism' was itself coined in the course of the development of the social movement. All the same, within The Cause, distinctions are made between feminism and the social movement for change in women's position. One is Mary Wollstonecraft, feminist theorist and author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

If the nineteenth-century women's movement is looked at as a movement for increased participation by women in social and political life, or as a movement which negotiated the relative and shared positions men and women were to occupy in the social, political, and economic order, it makes sense to invoke each woman as a symbolic figure. Hannah More had a part to play in the general redefinition of women's sphere; Mary Wollstonecraft articulated women's claims, needs and desires at a deeper level. There is theory (Mary Wollstonecraft) and practice (Hannah More), consciousness of the rights of women and lack of consciousness, Mary and Martha coinciding.

Hannah More was not just a feminist, she was rabid anti feminist: it was she who described Mary Wollstonecraft (whose book she had not read) as 'a hyena in petticoats'. Her Practice was part of overall change, but allowed women in the public sphere, only when domestic duties had been fulfilled. Such a position was far removed from Mary Wollstonecraft's vision, which questioned the value of women's confinement to the domestic sphere and saw increased public participation by women, up to and including political citizenship, as a good in itself.

How does the Researcher here make her distinctions between feminism and the women's movement? Her discussion of the rise of the women's movement stresses a coincidence of factors, which helped bring it into being. These include: women's shared exclusion from political, social and economic life, with a rebellion against this; middle-class women's sense of uselessness; and the formulation of common objectives, culminating in the demand for political citizenship through the vote. The women's movement rightly rejected certain rigid organizational forms and certain 'over-totalizing' political theories; but in doing so it often enough advanced the personal, the spontaneous and the experiential as though these provided an adequate political strategy, rejected 'theory' in ways almost indistinguishable from commonplace anti-intellectualism, and in some of its sectors seemed as indifferent to the sufferings of anybody but women, and to the question of their political resolution, as some Marxists had seemed indifferent to the oppression of anybody but the working class.

There are other relations between feminism and post-structuralism. For of all the binary oppositions which post-structuralism sought to undo, the hierarchical opposition between men and women was perhaps the most virulent. Certainly it seemed the most perdurable: there was no time in history at which a good half of the human race had not been banished and subjected as a defective being, an alien inferior. This staggering fact could not of course

53 Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1933.

be put right by a new theoretical technique; but it became possible to see how, though historically speaking the conflict between men and women could not have been more real, the ideology of this antagonism involved a metaphysical illusion. If it was held in place by the material and psychical benefits which accrued to men from it, it was also held in place by a complex structure of fear, desire, aggression, masochism and anxiety which urgently needed to be examined. Feminism was not an isolatable issue, a particular 'campaign' alongside other political projects, but a dimension which informed and interrogated every facet of personal, social and political life. The message of the women's movement, as interpreted by some of those outside it, is not just that women should have equality of power and status with men; it is a questioning of all such power and status. It is not that the world will be better off with more female participation in it; it is that without the 'feminization' of human history, the world is unlikely to survive.
With post-structuralism, we have brought the strory of modern literary theory up to the present time. Within post-structuralism as a 'whole', real conflicts and differences exist whose future history cannot be predicted. There are forms of post-structuralism which represent a hedonist withdrawal from history, a cult of ambiguity or irresponsible anarchism; there are other forms, as with the formidably rich researches of the French historian Michel Foucault, which while not without their severe problems point in a more positive direction. There are modes of 'radical' feminism which emphasize plurality, difference and sexual separatism; there are also forms of socialist feminism which, while refusing to view the women's struggle as a mere element or sub-sector of a movement which might then dominate and engulf it, hold that the liberation of other oppressed groups and classes in society is not only a moral and political imperative in itself, but a necessary (though by no means sufficient) condition for the emancipation of women.

We have travelled, at any rate, from Saussure's difference between signs to the oldest difference in the world; and it is this which the Researcher would now explore. But, whilst the sense of uselessness or awareness of grievance might be sufficient to bring someone into the ambit of women's politics, or to a lasting achievement, which could benefit women in general, this in itself, in Ray Strachey's eyes, did not make someone a feminist. She does not include, for example, Caroline Norton as a feminist, nor Florence Nightingale, even though she includes Florence Nightingale's Cassandra as prototypical of feeling amongst middle-class women. She writes of her that 'though she was a feminist of sorts…. Florence Nightingale has only incomplete and easily exhausted sympathy with the organized women's movement.
The inference is clear: Florence Nightingale put her own work first, women's rights were a side issue: a feminist would have put women's rights in the centre of her work. This definition of a feminist as someone whose central concern and preoccupation lies with the position of women and their struggle for emancipation is constant throughout The Cause; so is feminism as conscious political choice. Together, they allow a relatively objective differentiation between feminists and non-feminists. Feminists are not represented as more 'moral' than non-feminists.[54]

To define a feminist in this way, still implies an intimate connection between feminism and the women's movement. The feminists are the leaders, organizers, publicists, lobbyists, of the women's movement; they come into their own and into

54 At least, so it seems to me. Margaret Forster writes that feminists like Harriet Martineau regarded Caroline Norton with 'contempt' for her disavowal of feminism, and claims that Caroline Norton's insights were 'more truly feminist than any of the openly feminist tracts of her day', Significant Sisters (Secker & Warburg, London, 1984), 50. This argument begs the question of the content of feminist ideas.

existence on a relatively large scale in the course of development of a women's movement. The social movement, particularly in its political dimension, provides the context for feminism; feminists are its animating spirits.

Histories of feminism, which treat feminism as social movement, tend to concentrate on chronicling the vicissitudes of that movement and subordinate any exploration of the intellectual content of feminism to that main purpose.

Ray Strachey's account of feminism's development in the cause is by now a standard one. First there is the appearance of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, described as 'the text' of the later movement. Then there is a forty-year silence, preceding the emergence of the first women's organizations – the practical movement. True to the correlation between feminism and social movement, it is a narrative according to which feminism finally 'starts' and achieves itself within the form of a social movement of women for their emancipation. What happens if this story is unpicked, if the history of ideas is allowed parity with the history of a movement? It also depends on an implicit separation of the terms of equation feminism = the social movement of women. A shift in emphasis unveils a hidden link in feminism's fortunes.

The exploration of feminist history is severely limited if the appearance of the social movement is assumed to be feminism's apotheosis and privileged form. The ebb and flow of feminism's intellectual history is important here, since it enables a different perspective to be placed on the movement itself. A study of these various combinational forms of feminism, can illuminate both the means of diffusion of feminist ideas, and the different tendencies within feminism when it does exist in conjunction with a social movement of women, explicitly used here as medium to deconstruct.

In Ray Strachey's account Mary Wollstonecraft's work gains meaning by becoming 'the text' of the later movement. Do later feminists share Mary Wollstonecraft's philosophical radicalism? The Researcher makes the claim in the absence of any sustained discussion of feminism's intellectual content.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman combines an appeal on behalf of women with a general social critique, which employs key themes from the Enlightenment and uses them to illuminate women's position and needs. Mary Wollstonecraft extends this idea to women, widening out criticism of hereditary rights, duties and exclusions, to include those, which derive from sexual difference.

This drive to extend the field of social criticism in order to encompass women, is carried forward in the name of women's basic humanity. The claim is first and foremost that women are members of the human species and therefore have the rights due to all humans. If women are human they have reason and have the right to develop their reason in pursuit, not least, of religious knowledge.[55] There is an argument against women's confinement to the world of artifice and their consequent exclusion from the world of natural rights. Rousseau's Emile is specifically pinpointed here by the Researcher because within it, women are deliberately constructed as objects of sexual desire, and by that confined to a lifetime's subordination

55 In The Reasonableness of Christianity Locke includes women amongst those 'who cannot know and therefore must believe'; as such they could be excluded from considerations of equality. In his own lifetime Mary Astell and the unknown author of An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex used his work on human understanding to stake the claim that 'mind has no sex' and that women, as members of the human species, had rights to equal mental development with men.

within limits defined by male needs.[56] The Researcher accurately calls it a plea for equal human rights.

The basis of political freedom is expressed in the great maxim of the equality of all men, of humanity, of all human beings, before the law. The unit of modern society is not the family but the individual. Therefore every individual is prima facie entitled to all the franchises and freedoms of the constitution. The political position of women ought, and finally, must be, determined by reference to that large principle… Each individual receives the right to vote in the character of human being, possessing intelligence and adequate reasoning power. To be human and to be sane are the essential conditions…. [The Researcher emphasis]

By contrast, Helen Taylor, daughter of Harriet Taylor and stepdaughter of J. S. Mill, recommended the Ladies Petition presented by Mill to the Commons in 1866, in the following terms:

This claim, that since women are permitted to hold property they should also be permitted to exercise all the rights which, by our laws, the possession of property brings with it, is put forward in this petition on such strictly constitutional grounds, and is advanced so entirely without reference to any abstract rights, or fundamental changes in the institutions of English society, that it is impossible not to feel that the ladies who make it have done so with a practical purpose in view, and that they conceive themselves to be asking only for the recognition or rights which flow naturally from the existing laws and institutions of the country.[57]

She invokes support for female suffrage and the suffragists on the grounds that the suffragists eschew natural rights and support the rights of property. As it is opposed to any priori theories of the rights of man, [the Researcher emphasis], it is also opposed to any attempt to give or withhold privileges for merely natural reasons, such as differences of sex.'[58] 'Property represented by an individual is true political unit among us', she claims.

By holding property, women take on the rights and the duties of property. If they are not interested in politics their property is. Poor-laws and game-laws, corn-laws and malt-tax, cattle-plague-compensation bills, the manning of the navy, and the conversion of Enfield rifles into breech-loaders – all these things will make the property held by English women more or less valuable to the country at large… [And] it is on the supposition that property requires representation that a property qualification is fixed by the law.[59]

The ideal of equal human rights did not stay in the center of feminist preoccupations. The term 'equal rights' is filled with different contents. The picture, which emerges, is of a fragmented movement, its aims like pebbles thrown into the stream of social, political, economic and cultural life, producing rippling circles which touch and overlap, but of which no one could be with any certainty called the focal point.

56 Both Locke and Rousseau are used against themselves. Their categories of the individual as property owner and paterfamilias are subverted by the claim that women have the right to be considered thinking and reasoning subjects (after Locke) and feeling subjects (after Rousseau). This is not a rejection of their arguments, but an incorporation of them. In particular, Rousseau is not, as is sometimes claimed, rejected by Mary Wollstonecraft but is used and assimilated within her work.

57 Helen Taylor, 'The Ladies Petition' in Westminster Review (Jannuary 1867), 63-79.

58 Ibid., 63-4.

59 Ibid., 70.

Enfranchisement of women was not a central concern for Mary Wollstonecraft. She introduces the subject with certain diffidence: To quote-

I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government. But, as the whole system of representation in this country is only a convenient handle for despotism, they need not complain, for they are as well represented as a numerous class of hard working mechanics.[60]

From the 1850s onwards, feminists (in Ray Strachey's definition of the animating spirits of the movement) agreed that women 'ought to have representatives', more forcefully than the idea was ever held by Mary Wollstonecraft. Not all maintained her link between women and 'mechanics': this was often jettisoned together with the concept of natural human rights, which informs it. Hence the fierce debate between feminists, as well as between some feminists and non-feminists, about the relationship of women's suffrage to universal adult suffrage. What replaced the notion of 'human' rights was one of 'women's' rights, which depended not so much on a concept of woman as species member, but on woman as member of a specific social group composed of herself and other women.

Who could best represent women? Women or selected men? Could women's interests be distinguished from men's? Could women represent men? Could they represent the interests of the state? Could they take on the duties as well as the rights of the citizen?[61]

The position of married women in particular created a the concept of woman implicit in this vision was shared by many feminists who asserted that women's gentler nature would attenuate the violence of male politics difficulty since in law married women were entirely represented by their husbands.[62]

An analysis of the shifts and changes which have taken place in the meaning and content of 'womanhood' for feminists is intrinsic to any study of feminism as a specific body of thought or practice. The study of combinational forms of feminism is also important and here the terms of general social analysis can be crucial.

Feminists have not always had the same concept of woman, either at any one time or over time, and those moments at which changes have taken place in dominant feminist thinking about women can be pinpointed. It is possible to mould its material into a satisfying narrative.

Combined, they can give feminist historiography an evolutionist and progressivist flavour. Characteristics of the modern movement (like the commitment to autonomy, separatism, or whatever) are taken as definitional of feminism and looked for in past experiences. Disjunctures and dead ends tend to be ignored.

60 Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Norton, NY, 1967), 220.

61 There was much discussion, for example, of whether women could take on the duties of the armed citizen. It was several years before suffragists began to say that women in childbirth, risked their lives as much as the soldier, did. The Conservative politician, Goldwyn Smith, expostulated, 'we have only to imagine the foreign policy of England determined by women, while that of other countries is determined by the men; and this in the age of Bismarck'. (Female Suffrage', Macmillan's Magazine, Vol 30 (June 1874), 139-50.)

62 The most famous definition of this principle came form Blackwood's Commentaries: 'By marriage, the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything and she is therefore called in our law a feme covert' (femme couvert). The principle of coverture meant that generally speaking the married woman did not exist as legal subject or as property owner.

In the Researcher's view, these problems are derived from overstrict identification of feminism with a women's movement, and of the history of feminism with the history of the achievement of the aims of that movement.

The focus on feminism as activity, as campaigns around issues, tends to underplay the nature of the general debate about women and the extent to which feminists were involved in setting its terms. Claims are often made, for example, about women's 'silence' or exclusion from public speech in the nineteenth century. It is hard to find much evidence to support this in the journals of the period.[63] Rhetoric of exclusion is taken as factual description. Pride of place is given to feminism's dramas.

Does it not sum up a certain position in regard to women's politics, to feminism, to its history, to women in general? Men think and write, women do; men thought and wrote, women did (the most famous novel about the New Women was called The Woman Who Did). Men reflect; women act out. But in their acting, what ideas were feminist women drawing on, using, transforming, and creating? The answers to these questions are often occluded by the presentation of feminism as spectacle.

Present and Past

Instead of a progressive and cumulative history of feminism, it is a historical examination of the dynamics of persistence and change within feminism, which is needed. This inheritance is not simply a part of the past but lives in the present, both as a part of the conditions of existence of contemporary feminism, and as a part of that very feminism.

When the women's liberation movement came into existence in the late 1960s, it emerged into a social order already marked by an assimilation of other feminisms. Feminism was already a part of the political and social fabric. It was not present as a dominant force: feminists were after all, the representatives of a subordinate group.[64]

It had become acceptable, before the emergence of the women's liberation movement, to think about women as a separate social group with needs and interests of their own, even if this way of thinking has been unstable and not always in evidence. This does not mean that only feminists treated 'woman' as a unified category, or that anyone who does so is a feminist. Although the suffrage movement affected a political shift away from exclusive considerations of women as sex to emphasize women as social group, the post-suffrage movement (after much conflict) adopted a concept of woman based on the needs of reproduction and the social value of maternity.[65]

63 part from a stream of articles from various hands published in the Fortnightly review and the Westminster Review, the Edinburgh Review, Contemporary Review, Fraser's Magazine, Macmillan's magazine, the Nineteenth century, the New Review, the National Review, and the Theological review, all carried a range of articles written by women who would have described themselves as feminists.

64 Participants in nineteenth-century campaigns included the daughters of British radicalism, of fathers active in the Anti-Corn Law League, the movement to abolish slavery, the agitation for the 1832 reform Bill. Their aim was to be incorporated into the ruling group, to have their rights recognized and their ideas re-represented within a liberal consensus. The Cause gives a good portrait of this aspect of the suffrage movement. Paul McHugh, in Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform (Croom Helm, London, 1980), includes an account of the personnel involved in the Ladies National Association for the Abolition of the Contagious Diseases Act.

65 The years following the suffrage, witnessed fierce debates between 'old' feminists and 'new'. The platform of the 'new' feminists, adopted by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (the new name of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies) in 1925, was that feminists should turn away form demands for equality with men, and concentrate on those issues specific to women as women. They linked women's special needs to those concerned with maternity and reproduction, and feminism to issues like birth control and family allowances. See Mary Stocks, Eleanor Rathbone (Gollancz, London, 1949) and Rosalind Delmar, 'Afterword' to Vera Brittain, Testament of Friendship (Virago and Fontana, London 1980).

The female voice has been a part of the project of feminism. In general – **specifically in this thesis** to attempt to transform women from an object of knowledge into a subject capable of appropriating knowledge, to affect a passage from the state of subjection to subjecthood.[66]

Women's liberation groups formed within a context, which already included a programme for women's legal and political emancipation –the unfinished business of 1928 –, and pressure groups and lobbyists working for it.[67]

This simultaneity of what might be called an 'old' feminism and a 'new' is perhaps one reason why broad and loose definitions of feminism have such an appeal, and why such broad definitions can be shared by feminists and non-feminists.

At the start of the contemporary women's liberation movement, it was common for women's liberationists to distance themselves from emancipationism, the campaign for equality between the sexes. Despite this, women's liberation has spawned campaigns for legal and financial equality, equal opportunity at work, and other demands, which have an emäncipationist object. 'Women's right to enter a man's world' is both demanded and criticized. Traces of the feminist past and its often-unsolved problems persist in collective social memories and the various social meanings of feminism. It is more difficult than might at first be thought to distinguish between a feminist and a non-feminist image of feminism; often only the interpretations differ.

Feminists were, and still are, imagined as confined to the narrow world of women, the marginal world of women's issues, cut off from the general field of human endeavour (which in some vocabularies is called class politics). Fear of separation and marginalization still has a strong inhibitory power.

There were in effect, various concepts from feminist discourses (and various responses to them) already in circulation when the first new women's groups began to meet in the 1960s. One of the most striking features of women's liberation and radical feminism was their recourse to a new language-the language of liberation rather than emancipation, of collectivism rather than individualism. Radical sociology and Marxism were placed in the foreground of attempts to analyze women's position.

'Sexual politics' held together the idea of women as social group dominated by men as social group (male domination/female oppression), at the same time as turning back to the issue of women as sex outside the bounds of reproduction. It is, however, the pursuit of questions about the female body and its sexual needs, which has become distinctive of contemporary feminism.

For past feminism, it was male sexuality that was at issue: the need was as much to contain male sexuality as to liberate women from the work of paying the costs of male desire. There are feminists today, for whom women's problem is still male desire. But alongside the challenge to male sexuality there goes a curiosity about female desire, female sexuality and the problems of relations between women.

66 One can trace elements of this project in the combination of Mary Wollstonecraft's political and fictional writings. Alexandra Kollontai picks out the theme in the conclusion to her essay 'The New Woman', when she writes that 'Woman, by degrees, is being transformed from an object of tragedy of the male soul into the subject of an independent tragedy', Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Woman (Orbach and Chambers, London, 1972), 103.

67 The Sex Discrimination Act went through Parliament in 1975 after a campaign in which the new women's groups took very little interest; there were other women's organizations carrying that particular torch. Mary Stott evokes the encounter between these 'old' and 'new' feminists in Before I Go (Virgo, London, 1985).

At the same time the autonomous female subject has become, in a much more pronounced way, the subject of feminism. In 1966, J. S. Mill could be welcomed as an adequate representative of women's aspirations by the first women's suffrage societies. As recently as 1972 Simone de Beauvior could refer to feminists as 'those women or even men who fight to change the position of women, in liaison with and yet outside the class struggle, without totally subordinating that change to a change in society'[68]. Feminism is increasingly understood by feminists as a way of thinking created by, for, and on behalf of women, as 'gender-specific'. Women are its subjects, its enunciators, the creators of its theory, of its practice and of its language.[69]

When this intensification of emphasis on women as the subject of feminism coincides with an emphasis on women as feminism's object and focus of attention (women's experience, literature, history, psyche, and so on) certain risks are run. The doubling-up of women, as subject and object, can produce a circular, self-confirming rhetoric and a hermetic closure of thought. The feminine subject becomes trapped by the dynamics of self-reflectivity within the narcissism of the mirror image.[70]

Feminism's fascination with women is also the condition of the easy slippage from 'feminist' to 'woman' and back: the feminist becomes the representative of 'woman', just as 'feminist history' becomes the same as 'women's history' and so on.

It is, for example, one of women's liberation's paradoxes that although it started on the terrain of sexual antagonism between men and women, it moved quickly to a state in which relations between women caused the most internal stress. Women, in a sense, are feminism's greatest problem. The assumption of a potential identity between women, rather than solving the problem, became a condition of increasing tensions.

This result serves feminist purposes by providing evidence, that change is possible because the social meaning of womanhood is malleable.

One indication of this crisis is the way in which 'sexual division' and 'sexual difference' are named with increasing frequency as the objects of feminist enquiry. Bearing this in mind the Researcher has made it an important aspect of her research to both –a) **analyze** and b) **chapterize** psychoanalytic and literary critical theory.

Radical feminism, for example, has depended as much as some Marxist political theories on such an assertion: sex war replaces class war as the 'truth' of history, and in its enactment the sexes are given a coherent identity. To deconstruct the subject 'woman', to question whether 'woman' is a coherent identity, is also to imply the question of whether 'woman' is a coherent political identity, and therefore whether women can unite politically, culturally, and socially as 'women' for other than very specific reasons. It raises questions about the feminist project at a very fundamental level.

How far the practico-theoretical fragmentation of what calls itself the women's movement can be related to the lack of cohesiveness of the concept 'woman', is a matter of

68 Simone de Beauvior, interview with Alice Schwartzer; translation published in 7Days, London, 8 March 1972.

69 It is Stephen Heath, whose unpublished paper, 'Male Feminism' helped clarify this point. The changes indicated here are expressive of a general shift in relations between men and women within feminism.

70 This dimension of feminism is absorbingly represented in the film Riddles of the Sphinx by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (BFI, London 1977). See especially episode 12, 'Maxine's room', described in the script as 'space fragmented by reflections and reflections within reflections' (*Screen*, Vol 18, Summer 1977,2).

speculation. The nineteenth-century social movement was also fragmented, and spoke, as do feminisms today, to a general political crisis of representation. This crisis is not restricted neither to feminists, nor to the political institutions and political languages, which they have had a part in making. In what form, forms or combinations feminism will survive is not a question, which can yet be answered?

Feninism and Revolution

(The Feminist Praxis)

The fastest way to evade and trivialize the question of the revolutionary potential of feminism, is to play the definitional game: "It all depends on what you mean by feminism"- or, for that mater, by "revolution." It can be argued that feminism is revolutionary because feminism attacks the integrity of the family. The family is traditionally and actually an irreplaceable foundation brick in the structure of all known societies, and that the removal of this particular brick would bring the whole edifice tumbling down, and thus entail a revolution in social structure. As a matter of fact, what the Researcher argues is not all that different from this. What is very different, is the way in which the Researcher wants to argue it.
Feminism is revolutionary because it is historical, and also because this is a history of struggle. Starting from the history of the lived lives and relations of real people, Marx found in these relations the reality of division by socio-economic class growing out of the historical divisions of labour. Class struggle is revolutionary because it is historical, and history is revolutionary because it is the history of class struggle. The truth is that male supremacist praxis is trans historical, and increasing numbers of women are skeptical of the notion that the inevitable motion of class dialectic will ultimately liberate them.

This does not mean that feminists should abandon class struggle, nor regretfully dismiss Marx as a great guy but a hopeless patriarch. What it does mean is that the ways in which productive and reproductive social formations relate to each other must be opened up to a more rigorous and refined critique. The Researcher believes that the critique of male supremacy, which can uncover the revolutionary structure of women's history and create a living feminist praxis, must be conducted from within Marxism. Women's consciousness and women's oppression is this class experience, but it is also more than this, for in all male-dominated societies, the oppression and exploitation of women by men crosses class barriers.

Feminism is the history of resistance to male exploitation, and is therefore not a history, which can be understood fully in terms of the theory of class struggle. The fact that class struggle and genderic struggle are related has meant that, in the more cataclysmic historical moments of class struggle, women have been there, more so than we can know if we read only men's account of these events. There is, however, a different struggle and a real struggle, which is the true history of feminism. To be sure, this struggle has not produced the dramatic social upheavals which class struggle has precipitated. It must be understood in terms of visible social structure. If the visible social structure of male oppression cannot be ascribed, particularly by historical materialism, to the ideological strength of male supremacy, or to biological determinism, it must be understood in terms of visible social structure. If the visible social structure of male oppression is not class struggle, it is incumbent upon feminists to say what it is. The Researcher here submits that the structure in question is the structure in which the social relations of reproduction have developed historically, and that this is the structure by which private life and the personal have been separated from public life and political. The opposition of public and private is to the social relations of reproduction, what the opposition of economic classes is to the social relations of production.

It is the basis of Marx and Engels' view of the need to socialize domestic labour, thus breaking down the privatization and devaluation of women's work. The Contemporary feminism started off with an uncritical acceptance of how value of reproductive labour assigned to it by "male-stream" thought. With impeccable logic, Firestone argued that, as the historical oppression of women was grounded in female reproductive function, the emancipation of women depended upon our escape from our biological destiny. This theory is unsound, for its premise that women's oppression stands in causal relationship with biological function cannot be demonstrated empirically. It is also incapable of providing a rallying point for a widely based women's praxis, for many women resist the notion that their maternal experience has no value. But the inadequacies of early feminist theory have not prevented the growth of the movement, not out of theory but out of change in the material conditions of women's lives. The conditions of early theory were the conditions of male reproductive experience, which has not been subjected to radical change. Just as the development of capitalism not only changed productive relations but exposed to the light of day the inner workings of the true sub-structure of these relations, so the transformations wrought in reproductive relations by recent changes in contraceptive technology, expose the material grounds of genderic oppression and open them up to a heretofore impossible critical analysis. Women's place in the reproduction of the species involves her body and her mind. So does men's. The forms of reproductive consciousness are related to gender. Men and women are joined together by class-consciousness, but they are separated by reproductive consciousness.

Women do not need to bear children to partake in female reproductive consciousness, for such consciousness is a socially and culturally transmitted collective consciousness. Women have a particular form of reproductive consciousness, not because they are mothers, but because they are women.

Take, for example, the proposition women have a "special relationship" with nature, which, in its extreme form, says that women are identified with nature. What is wrong with the hand-me-down view is that it suggests that women are immediately related to nature when in actual fact women's relationship with nature is mediated, and the mode of mediation is reproductive labour. The separation of all people from the natural world is mediated in the process of productive labour, but the relation of women to the biological world of species continuity is mediated by reproductive labour.

In Marx's perception of human consciousness, consciousness resists alienation in terms of both thinking and doing. Men have erected a huge social edifice to facilitate and justify that appropriation of women's children, which we call partriarchy.

The brotherhood notion is an essential and materially grounded plank in the ideological platform of male supremacy, which, like reproductive consciousness, transcends class.

The working out is not exclusively a women's problem but a human problem, however, women are the progressive social force in the struggle. The bringing to light of the dialectics of reproduction is reflected in the recent history of the Women's Movement. In doing these things, feminism moves erratically but irresistibly towards the feminist praxis, which understands its past, lives it's present for itself, and prepares to make its future.

Feminist Theory and Feminist Practice

There is one quite important sense in which feminist scholarship is an act of definition or, more accurately, redefinition. For feminist scholarship and feminist experience, redefinition is always a critique. We are, nonetheless, constrained to express our critique in the language of the oppressor[71].

Thus, if one argues, as the Researcher proposes to do, that feminist politics is socialist politics, she enters into debates upon the meaning of socialism, and, if she wants to enter that debate on

the bases of material rather than ideal receptions, and on historical rather than ideological phenomena, she will at once then enter into the controversies of socialist development: specifically, into the controversies surrounding Karl Marx as a critical and creative socialist and Marxism as an identifiable historical development of profound political significance. We have, however, reservations about Marx's theory, and even more about Marxist praxis.[72] Feminist socialist theoretical work tries to transform the former in a way, which represents the actual historical experience of women. Women in the Left, on the other hand, have tended to a strategic reliance on a reductionist trivialization of the theory of class struggle, which gives to that theory a theological status and a universality which does not transcend but simply ignores the condition of women[73] central, then, to feminist struggle is the need to analyze and define from a particular perspective, from the standpoint of women. As the standpoint of women has its location, as has that of men, in the realm of necessity, much feminist sociology takes as its theme the waged but also the unwaged labour of women. Much effort has been expended in trying to fit women's dualist work into the process by which capitalism appropriates surplus value.[74] Feminist scholarship has learned that the division of labour involved in these enterprises –a division defined according to academic tradition – is constraining, while an arbitrary hegemony given to economic social formations, tends to obliterate the equally "necessary" social relations of reproduction. It is clear that feminism must eventually transcend both the academic divisions of labour and the one-sidedness of Marxist theory, and must do this within the dialectical process, which we call history.
It follows from these arguments, the Researcher thinks, that the first stage of political transformation involves a struggle within socialism. Carol Ehrlich argues that the basic tasks for feminism are well defined; "Destroy Capitalism, End Patriarchy, Smash Heterosexism" (Ehrlich 1977:29). All other strategies are at best partial, though Ehrlich admits that the prescription for a revolution of individualists acting collectively does present some difficulties. The problem of the autonomous individual presents too many unexamined and unadmitted problems to feminist socialists to be dismissed as bourgeois idealism. Individuals are, after all,.products of labour- women's labour- and as such they must, by definition, have value.
Feminists have, therefore, a monumental task to do in the uncovering of the patriarchal givens of socialist theory, a task that embraces political as well as economic phenomena, and individual as well as class considerations. Feminist socialism is committed in a way in which Marxist socialism is not to the abolition of this theoretical and actual division of public and private life.

What individuals cannot own under socialism, is the control of the means of production, and, under feminist socialism, control of the means of reproduction. We may regret but we should not be surprised by the appeal of the Radical Right to women, for the Right is astute enough to speak to women of their experienced concerns. It does not do for socialist feminists to protest

71 Dorothy Smith, "Using the Oppressor's Language". Shirley & Vigier 1979: 10-18. See also Spender 1981.

72 See, for example, Miles 1978:25.

73 Rosa Luxemburg is perhaps the most obvious example, although it should be noted that Luxemburg's refusal to consider the oppression of women as a separate issue was in part due to her resistance to attempts by the SPD to neutralize her by pushing her into what was perceived as a harmless tributary of economic struggle, namely, the women's movement. See Waters 1970:5.

74 A recent contribution and bibliography can be found in Fox 1980.

that it is wrong to define women's experience confirms this, and when, in the second place, no political priority is given to changing the material conditions of women's lives, which is what materialist strategy demands. Delphy is correct in arguing that patriarchy is, in fact, the Main Enemy, for it is not only the oppressor of women but the Achilles heel of socialist praxis: men in general defend their privileges. It is for these reasons that the initial struggle must be within socialism.

Marx's is a theory of necessity, and the sub-structural priority of economic relations, derives its hegemony from the proposition that people must eat to "reproduce" themselves on a day-to-day basis. The hegemony, which Marxism awards to productive relations, is rarely defended, presumably because it is judged self-evident. For example, the social identification of the private realm as the fit place for women's work simply does not grow out of the realities which inform productive consciousness: they grow out of the realities of reproductive consciousness and male definitions of women's labour as low in value creation, a fact which has not prevented males of any class from enjoying the appropriated values of women's forced domestic labour.

More importantly, the question of values is vital to feminist politics in regard to the question of violence. There can be no doubt that class and gender hegemony rest firmly on a base of culturally legitimated violence.

The question is: does female resistance to violent solutions derive from the norm of passivity invented and enforced by the ruling sex, or does it derive from actual female experience in the reproduction of the race? The way in which feminists answer this question is crucial to the development of feminist strategy. Men, on the other hand, show a dread of women adopting a strategy of withholding of sexual "favours."

The fact appears to be that none of the political strategies inherited from "male-stream" thought and action appear to be effective in the case of feminist struggles. There are, no doubt, women in many places who are participating in the creation of armament caches for revolutionary activities, but, so far as we know, such activities are not predicated on feminist principles. More importantly, we should attempt to formulate new strategies of emancipation predicated on developing feminist theory. The way to do this, the Researcher would submit, is in on-going struggle within the socialist movement and continuous practical efforts to reshape and redefine forms of the social relations of reproduction.

When the Researcher first encountered what mighty loosely be referred to as 'feminist theory' in the early 1980s, it came to her as a series of competing explanations of women's oppression. The emphasis was very much upon how existing theories might be extended and reworked to provide answers to questions about how to challenge inequality.

As the Researcher here now, deciding on how to approach a chapter on "feminist theory in the late 1990s, is struck by the level and breadth of theoretical knowledge, demanded of a contemporary readership, wanting to get to grips with this body of work. With the rapid growth in feminist scholarship, both inside and outside Women's Studies, and an increased engagement with highly **specialized theories in the academy, many would argue that there is now a sense in which the capital 'T' of feminist Theory has come to take precedence over the capital 'F'.** What Feminist Theory so often signifies today, is an engagement with Theory, capital 'T'?

Much recent feminist theory has drawn on these bodies of work in order to open up debates about the meaning of the category 'woman'. **For post structuralists, the notion of any fixed identity category is problematic and thus 'woman' should be regarded as a constantly shifting signifier of multiple meanings, true to the concept of research undertaken in this thesis implying the theory of deconstruction to validate the position of**

woman in literature both as a reader and writer and also as the written/subject. Rejecting the assumption that identity categories have essential or constant meaning across time place and historical context, poststructuralists see their task as interrogating how culture ascribes meaning to such categories, to that extent, the Researcher here can also be considered as post-structuralist. The term 'individual' is rejected as part of the liberal humanist belief system that we are autonomous beings, free to choose how we live and unconstrained by power structures; instead the term 'subject' is used widely to indicate that our sense of self is a construction and that we are positioned by sets of ideas and practices, or discourse: the subject here is seen as an 'effect of language', as 'positioned by discourse' (see Coward and Ellis, 1977; Henriques et al., 1984; Weedon, 1987). In other words, rather than assuming that humans from particular groups are oppressed by an external culture that is imposed upon them, these models insist that our sense of selves as subjects is something that language systems produce; language thus speaks us, rather than the other way around.

Many of these theories of subjectivity and language, overlap with post-modernism which also questions the possibility of the authenticity of experience and the unified subject as the origin of meaning, emphasizing instead the endless rehearsal and 'intertextuality' of cultural representations, styles and modes of expression. The Significance of such a pronouncement for feminist theory is highly contradictory. Post-modernist thinking, then, has produced some uncomfortable questions for many feminists: does self-knowledge lead to liberation; does feminism have its own progress narratives; and, is the notion of liberation separable from its liberal humanist and modernist foundations?

These post-structuralist and post-modernist theoretical frameworks have been widely utilized by some feminists, in order to challenge what they see as the problematically humanist, essentialist and empiricist tendencies of previous (and, indeed, current) feminist work (see Weedon, 1987; Weed, 1989; Nicholson, 1990; Butler and Scott, 1992; McNay, 1992). The Researcher's point here is not to underestimate the significance of this work, or to distance her from it (for much of her own work engages with different elements of it), but rather to comment upon the impossibility of introducing much of it satisfactorily in a chapter such as this. This raises important questions about the hierarchy of disciplines in the production of what counts as legitimate Theory, and about the actual meaning of interdisciplinary in Women's Studies.

Typically, the three classic feminist positions have been characterized as follows: radical feminism focuses on male violence against women and men's control of women's sexuality and reproduction, seeing men as a group as responsible for women's oppression; Marxist feminism, in contrast, sees women's oppression as tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labour, and thus women's paid and unpaid work is analyzed in relation to its function within the capitalist economy; and finally, Liberal feminism is distinctive in its focus on individual rights and choices which are denied to women, and ways in which the law and education could rectify these injustices. In some accounts, Socialist feminism and Marxist feminism are distinct from one another; Socialist feminism is less economically deterministic, and allows some kind of autonomy to women's oppression, yet retains a belief that women's liberation and socialism are joint goals. Black feminism (and sometimes lesbian feminism) is then usually attached as an addition, as if they were unified categories in need of no further differentiation. Whilst the contrast between these three perspectives proved a useful shorthand for the ways in which competing feminist explanations of women's oppression had their roots in different theoretical and political traditions, this particular typology not only became rather

hackneyed in what it described, but also proved to be highly problematic in what it excluded: much feminist writing cut across these rigid divisions, rendering them meaningless.

Finding these accounts of feminist theory overly conventionalized, the Researcher decided to deconstruct it. Hence here, 'Untangling Feminist Theory', as an account of some of the problematic and unresolved theoretical debates within a range of feminist theories; debates about the usefulness of the term patriarchy', about universals and particulars, about the category 'woman' and about essentialisms and social constructionisms are taken as example of theoretical problems across the disciplines. Given the opportunity to return to the difficult task of writing an introductory chapter on feminist theory the Researcher was struck by an important change in how feminist theory is written about and, most especially, taught in Women's Studies. Twenty-five years of feminism seems to have marked the threshold that requires the writing of its theoretical history to begin the previous typologies are starting to be replaced by a model of periods phases in feminist thinking. In other words the previously synchronic construction of respective feminist positions has been replaced by an increasingly prevalent diachronic construction of a history of feminist theory.

However, the Researcher finds herself equally concerned about this mode of writing about Feminist Theory. Some of the same pitfalls, exist in the accounts of feminism theory across the decades (the diachronic approach) as did in the perspectives in feminist theory (the synchronic approach). Thus, in 'Untangling Feminist Theory', the Researcher aims to avoid reinforcing what the Researcher continues to perceive to be unhelpful stereotypes of particular types of feminism and feminists in the 'perspectives' approach to feminist theory (socialist feminists are not concerned with sexuality, radical feminists are all essentialists and so on: see Richardson, 1996), the Researcher is now wanting to caution against some of the characterizations of past and present feminism in the 'developments' in feminist theory approach. In this chapter she wants to reflect upon the question of how accounts of Feminist Theory often constitute a very particular historical narrative. This has important implications not just for the writing of a history of feminism, but also for the teaching of feminist theory course within Women's Studies in higher education.

Constructions of 'feminist theory today', tend to rely upon notions of feminist theory in the past. The Researcher has read this shift in significance from the capital 'F' then to the capital 'T', now as indicative of institutional and political changes which continue to inform the meaning of the rather vague, but highly contested category which is the subject of this chapter: feminism/feminist theory. Perhaps second-wave feminism has come of age, is entering middle age or is simply troubled by an ambivalent nostalgia; whatever the reason, accounts of feminist theory now tend to conform to a very specific narrative trajectory. The story that the Researcher has heard most frequently is about a shift from 'naïve and simplistic' feminist theory to 'wise and sophisticated' Feminist Theory. It follows a classically developmental model in which the subjects of feminism today, present their theory in opposition to their version of feminist theory in the past, which is represented as rather unformed and crude. It is this version of Feminist Theory that the Researcher wishes to contest in this chapter.

The 70s feminist', with all the media stereotypes that figure evokes, is so frequently referred to in Women's Studies classes today, that the researcher can only conclude her presence in a feminist imaginary, to be highly significant. Now, '70s feminism' has been constituted as a key player in the narrative genealogy of feminist theory.

What troubles the Researcher about these tendencies in her experience of discussions about feminist theory within Women's Studies, is the extent to which we are in danger of reproducing some fairly conventional generational patterns of academic (and other cultural)

practices. This history of feminist theory that the Researcher has characterized, has been transformed into a personified teleology in which key players take their places. Just as 70s feminists in embracing the aims of the women's movement, rebelled against what they perceived as the complicit or compromised values of their mothers, so many 90s feminists (as well as non-feminists) retrospectively construct their pervious counterparts as hopelessly wanting. Today's accounts of developments in feminist theory, no longer take 'masculine knowledge' as their opponents; rather, 70s feminism has come to replace that old enemy.

Queer Positions

The use of the term 'queer' is itself taken to be emblematic of a new mood, a new sense of entitlement and a new defiance (see Butler, 1993; McIntosh, 1993; Braidotti with Butler, 1994). In particular, the term 'queer' was initially associated with HIV and AIDS activism in the USA which took the form of direct actions in which performances and staged politics accompanied the more conventional marches, petitions and demonstrations. Queer might be thought of not so much as an identity, but as a discursive position open to all.

'Queer theory' echoes some of these characteristics but not in a straightforward or an obvious way. It refers to a theoretical move rather than a particular writer and there is much debate about who does and does not conform to such a label. Some might use the term 'queer theory' to refer to the widespread academic attention in the last decade to writings about homosexuality. The work of Jonathan Dollimore (1991) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) in particular has been seen as typifying this queer position in literary studies, which insists not just on taking gay writing seriously, but on the centrality of homosexuality to the literary canon more generally.

Other accounts of queer theory might take Eve Sedgwick's and Judith Butler's work in tandem and name them as queer theorists because of their shared concern with reframing sexuality within a post-structuralist epistemology (Butler, 1990, 1993; Sedgwick, 1990). De Lauretis's own recent work (1994) might be taken to form a central part of queer theory insofar as she 'queers' psychoanalysis in search of a theory of the specificity of lesbian desire. Queer theory is, however, considerably more than the sum of its parts in terms of the work the category does in constructing theoretical histories. Queer theory has taken on a weighty, symbolic significance in debates about 'developments' in feminist Theory. Feminist theories of sexuality, especially of lesbianism, tend to get positioned in particular ways, in account of this distinctive break. Typically, in accounts of this history, lesbian feminist work (such as Rich, 1986) is contrasted with queer interventions (such as Butler, 1990) in relation to an attributed essentialism and a conservative identity politics in the former (see Richardson, 1996d).

This kind of characterization of queer theory in relation to feminist theory constructs a linear progress narrative in which Theory (capital T) has rescued feminism from its early naivety. It represents developments in feminist theory, as a journey from essentialism to fluidity, from ignorance to enlightenment. As Foucault (1979) argues, our sense of ourselves as the enlightened subjects at the end of a repressive historical teleology is itself part of the discourse of liberation that characterizes modernity.

What concerns the Researcher here, is the lack of attention to the continuities in past and present feminist theorizing. She does not seek to reveal an unbroken tradition in feminist thinking, but rather to caution against the 'radical break' characterizations because of the ways in which they ignore the continuing preoccupations of feminist theory that keep resurfacing, albeit in very different forms. She wants to highlight the ways in which feminist theory returns to particular thorny questions but does so in the context of changing historical and

political circumstances. In the following sections she will take two case studies – **'Writing the Self'** and **'Embodied Subjectivity'** – in order to explore her claims further.

Writing the Self

Although the crossing of the generic boundaries of writing has always been a preoccupation of feminist work (and indeed part of the politics of its project, as the Researcher shall discuss later), there has been a marked increase in the number of feminist texts that cannot be straightforwardly classified. Nancy Miller (1991) suggests the term "personal criticism' to describe these kinds of feminist intervention. Is it a new stage of theory? Is it only for women and gay men? Post-feminism?

For Miller, personal criticism is not turning one's back on theory but 'turning theory back on itself' (Miller, 1991, p. 5). As she goes on to argue, the introduction of more personal modes on writing into feminist theorizing can disperse the public private hierarchy that maintains masculine academic professionalism and indeed patriarchal cultural relations more generally.

The authority of theory relies upon the exclusion of the personal to maintain its status. The challenge to the authority of academic Theory in terms of its exclusionary practices has motivated a number of Black feminists to cross the usual generic boundaries of writing. Writers such as Audre Lorde 1984a, Barbara Smith (1986) and Gayatri Spivak (1988) have used letters, dialogues and polemic to open academic theorizing to personal and political questions of racism, anti-lesbianism and homophobia, and the reproduction of power in a (post) colonial work.

For feminists who wish to follow Christian's lead, there is always the danger that such a challenge can be read reinforcing inevitable or essential connections between emotions, femininity and Blackness for indeed between theory masculinity and whiteness). Should feminists then be wary of making claims that suggest a generalized sexual difference around the personal, such as: 'what interests women is the personal' (Miller, 1991, pp. 12-13)? For Miller, this claim might be recast as the question: 'if what seems important ("interesting") to women is personal, what seems important and interesting to men?'

In Family Secrets: Acts of memory and Imagination, Annette Kuhn 1995) offers another example of recent feminist investigation of the autobiographical self that is informed by post-structuralist theory, but also continues a concern with new modes of personal criticism. Kuhn highlights the patterns of memory formation and narrative retelling in her own autobiographical exploration of family photographs and the memories they prompt.

The reader is positioned at the interface of personal and theoretical discourses about self- representation. The Researcher quotes Kuhn, with a definite purpose of relating how experience can be distorted. 'Experience' has not disappeared from feminist theorizing in the 1990s, but its presentation to readers is accompanied by a warning: be wary of the truths we hold to be self-evident.

Elspeth Probyn's work, for example, is centrally concerned with ways of writing the gendered self into feminist cultural analysis in such a way that recognizes its discursive constitution but also includes accounts of experience. She writes, 'we cannot pretend that this is an easy thing to do, that there is an unmediated innocence to the self.

As the Researcher has previously detailed, the category ' woman' is as much the subject of critical interrogation in Women's Studies in the 1990s, as it is the starting point for assuming shared oppression (Stacey, 1993). The use of personal experience and autobiographical testimony has often been taken to characterize feminist theories of these periods. The trajectory that she has seen, rehearsed repeatedly, runs something like this: 70s feminists based their theories on their experience, which they included in their writing as an

authentic claim to a unified female identity, which they then generalized to include all women ignoring their own privileges as middle-class, heterosexual, white, Western Women. First, we might ask whether 70s feminist, theorists wrote predominantly in these personal modes. Miller argues that the 'authority of experience' was indeed a key current in feminist theory in the 1970s, but that 'despite that foundational construction, most academic women in the 1970s did not articulate that as a "new personalism" in their writing' (Miller, 1991, p. 14). The work of Carolyn Steedman (1986) and Valerie Walkerdine (1986, 1989) offered personal and theoretical challenges to theories of culture, which failed, in various ways, adequately to address the intersections of class, gender and historical location. Audre Lorde's work powerfully inscribed the personal within theoretical considerations of power and desire (Lorde, 1984a). Feminist theory that builds on the personal, then, might be seen to have been 'dismantled and renovated –to shape a variety of personal and less personal discourses at an oppositional angle to dominant critical positioning' (Miller, 1991, p. 14).

Embodied Subjectivity

The second case study takes feminist theories of the body as its starting point. The 1990s have seen the publication of a plethora of feminist books about the body: Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, Body Guards (1991); Elisabeth Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body (1992); Yvonne Tasker, Spectacular Bodies (1993); Barbara Stafford, Body Criticism (1993); Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter (1993); Emily Martin, Flexible Bodies (1994); Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies (1994); Jennifer terry and Jacqueline Urla, Deviant Bodies (1995); Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, Sexy Bodies (1995); Lisa Cartwright, Screening the Body (1995). Anne Balsamo, Technologies of the Gendered Body. Crossing conventional disciplinary boundaries, this work draws on film theory, sociology and anthropology, cultural studies, the history of science and literature.

In so far as it ever disappeared, the body has returned to take center stage in contemporary Feminist Theory. Heavily influenced by post-structuralist and post-modernist theory, and yet also critically reworking it, much of this work explores the bodily materiality and physicality of subjects. It shows a continued feminist concern with the exploitation of the bodies of particular groups of people: for example, the exchange of black bodies and labour during slavery or the objectification of women's bodies through visual representation (see McClintock, 1995). The body is thus seen to be both, the site of pain and pleasure, suffering and desire.

Accompanying the continued significance of Nature in popular cultural representations, is the expansion of feminist studies of science and technology (see Franklin and McNeil, 1991, 1993).

Having stressed the renewed interest in the body in current feminist theory, then, the Researcher wants to state firmly that this is a *continued* interest for many. Indeed, the study of the control of the female body has remained one of the most fundamental concerns of second-wave feminism. In the early 1970s, feminist theory and politics saw the exploitation of the body as the key to the patriarchal control of women: what women's bodies could and couldn't do' what their bodies did and didn't feel; where their bodies could and couldn't go; whose body did and did not matter (Firestone, 1971; Greer, 1971; Boston Women's Health Collective, 1973; Dreifus, 1977). Like the more personal modes of criticism discussed in the previous section, these interventions challenged the foundations of patriarchal knowledge about women and, indeed, the conventional modes of abstraction of social and cultural theorizing.

Beginning as 'the Doctors' Group' in the late 1960s, a number of women in Boston met to discuss the limits of doctors' knowledge about women's health (see Hockey, 1993, p.

264). Their work questioned conventional forms of medical expertise about women's bodies and began the ambitious project of collecting and collating alternative forms of knowledge through experiential and experimental methods. The clash between formal and informal, and between professional and personal; forms of knowledge about women's bodies and how to treat their medical problems has continued to be a fierce political and theoretical battle throughout the history of second-wave feminism.

Although highly diverse in many ways, this theory might be described as being unified around the project of feminine writing, l'ecriture feminine. A number of French feminist theorists in the 1980s contributed to a radical rewriting of the feminine subject (normally repressed within the Symbolic Order of patriarchal culture), posing a challenge to the conventional wisdoms of Freudinan and, more particularly, Lacanian, psychoanalysis. Luce Irigaray (1985a; 1985b), for example, offers an ironic account of the significance of sexual difference based upon feminine sexuality and the specificity of the feminine body; and Helene Cixous (1981) calls for the elaboration of a profoundly different feminine mode of expression based on writing the specificity of the feminine body. Julia Kristeva's work (see Moi, 1986) has also explored the relationship between perceptions of bodily difference and the construction of the sexed subject. Her interest in how the division between the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic' relates to the meanings of masculinity and femininity within patriarchal culture has placed beliefs about the mythical maternal body center stage.

The Researcher here wants to take one example, Kristeva's theory of 'abjection', to illustrate her claims briefly (Kristeva, 1982).

Is the impossible object, still part of the subject: an object the subject strives to expel but which is ineliminable. In ingesting objects into itself, or expelling objects from itself, the 'subject' can never be distinct from these 'objects'. The ingested/expelled 'objects' are neither part of the body, nor separate from it. The abject (including tears, saliva, faeces, urine, vomit, mucus) marks bodily sites that will later become erotogenic zones (mouth, eyes, anus, nose, genitals). The subject must expel these abjects to establish the 'clean and proper body' of oedipalization. (Grosz, 1992, p. 198)

Kristeva's theory of abjection has been challenged, but also reworked and elaborated in a number of recent feminist texts on the body (see Butler, 1990; Creed, 1993; Krauss, 1993; Mulvey, 1991; Grosz, 1994).

Building on Kristeva's notion of abjection her own recent theory of the 'corporeality' of sexual subjectivity, Elizabeth Grosz asks:

Can it be that in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as a formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much the phallus but self-containment – not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order? (Grosz, 1994, p.203)

It is not that Grosz is suggesting that women are like this, but rather that their corporeality has been 'inscribed as a mode of seepage' within a patriarchal culture that reassures itself by fixing boundaries and borders as immutable (Grosz, 1994, p. 203). Grosz's book contributes to the many reworking of a theory of abject and dangerous bodies, as symptoms of the fears and desires of dominant culture, be they manifest in the visual images of the female body and its flows in the cinema (Creed, 1993), in the bodily dimensions of racist 'expulsions and repulsions'.

The Researcher has taken Kristeva's theory of abjection as an example of how recent feminist work on embodied subjectivity continues to draw upon, and engage with, much earlier models of the gendered body. It is often the case that new work on the body defines itself in opposition to a more natural, taken-for-granted body of previous feminist theorists. Once again, removed from their political and historical location, early feminist theorists are frequently constructed as the bad objects, the essentialist predecessors, against which the more sophisticated theories of the body today are defined.

Heroines and Stars

The problem with the tendency to construct a developmental model of Feminist Theory based upon a progress narrative is partly that it reproduces highly traditional notions of history. As the Researcher has argued, such representations of past-present relations position the latest contributions as the most enlightened in opposition to the early simplicities of past thinkers. To narrate the story of Feminist Theory along such lines, is to strike an ironic chord when many feminist academics are themselves critical of the ways in which the narratives of modernity more generally follow a linear, progressivist pattern. For feminist theorists influenced by post-structuralism and post-modernism, for example, to be positioned as the Enlightened subjects at the end of a history of Feminist Theory, is a contradiction in terms.

A further problem with this kind of account of Feminist Theory is that, like all progress narratives, it produces its own forms of heroism. In the first section of this chapter the Researcher has explained why she wanted to avoid the 'key texts' approach to a chapter on feminist: theory. In short, she opposed the formation of a 'feminist canon'. To replace the Great Men of Theory with the Great women of Theory may change the gender, and indeed the agenda, but would do little to challenge the fetishising of Great Minds and of Genius that has characterized the individualism of the history of ideas.

For readers new to feminist theory, who have come to this chapter as a way to begin to explore unknown territory, she hopes they will not go away with the idea that if they read *x*, y and z, they will have 'done' feminist theory.

Pronote

Turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man's [genital organs], and you will find the same in both in every respect.

GALEN OF PERGAMUM [C. 130-200]

This chapter is about the corporeal theories of a world, where at least two genders correspond to but one sex, where the boundaries between male and female are of degree and not of kind, and where the reproductive organs are but one sign among many of the body's place in a cosmic and cultural order that transcends biology. The researcher's purpose in this chapter, is to give an account based largely on construction of femininity, of how the one-sex body was imagined; to stake out a claim that the one- sex/one-flesh model dominated thinking about sexual difference from classical antiquity to the end of the 21st century; and to suggest why the body should have remained fixed in the field of images hoary already in language, while the gendered self lived a nuanced history through all the immense social, cultural and literary changes that remarkably separates the world of Hippocrates from the world of Newton .

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Chapter-3

Femininity and its Construction....
(The Body in Writing....?)

Femininity as Mas(s)querade

In discussions of mass culture, gender has typically been theorized as simply one determining factor among many, one possible point of resistance to mass culture's attempts to homogenize social reality.
Marxism today has abandoned its exclusive reliance on the working class as agents of revolutionary change and grants women and a few other groups some importance as well.

To begin with, women find themselves at the center of many historical accounts of mass culture, damned as "mobs of scribbling women," in Hawthorne's famous phase, and held responsible for the debasement of taste and the sentimentalization of culture. As the example of Hawthorne suggests, historians of culture are not the only ones who blame women for creating the conditions of what Ann Douglas calls "the cultural sprawl that has increasingly characterized post-Victorian life."

In this chapter, the Researcher wants first to examine the orthodox position of the leftist historians on the way in which mass culture is condemned as a "feminized" culture. Then the Researcher will discuss the work of two artists, Manuel Puig, and a theorist, Jean Baudrillard, who, far from condemning mass culture because it is "effeminate," try to rehabilitate, and to some extent affirm it precisely on the grounds of its association with or resemblance to the feminine. Whether the latest development represents a gain for women or for feminism remains to be seen.
Discussing Little Eva in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin as the archetypal heroine of women's fiction and Little Eva's death as the archetypal event, Douglas writes:
"Stowe's infantile heroine anticipates that exaltation of the average which is the trademark of mass culture. Vastly superior as she is to most of her figurative offspring, she is nonetheless the childish predecessor of miss America, of "Teen Angel," of the ubiquitous, everyday, wonderful girl about whom thousands of popular songs and movies have been made.... In a sense, my introduction to Little Eva and to the Victorian scenes, objects and sensibility of which she is suggestive, was my introduction to consumerism. The pleasure Little Eva gave me provided historical and practical preparation for the equally indispensable and disquieting comforts of mass culture. (p. p. 2-3)"
Tompkins's strategy is to correct this bias by expanding the definition of "production" to include the kind of work that women do. Manuel Puig's acclaimed novel Kiss of the Spider Woman provides an excellent example of such a deconstructive text. The novel takes place in an Argentinian prison, where the homosexual "queen" Molina helps pass the time by relating film plots to his cellmate, the Marxist revolutionary Valentin.The setting of the novel obviously gives new meaning to the usually pejorative designation of mass-produced art as "escapist." The novel draws on the conventions of the prison film, only here the films themselves function as the "great escape."
Kiss of the Spider Woman is the story of the growing love of Valentin for Molina, although this is rendered obliquely, since the book presents us primarily with the dialogue between the two. "If you read something, if you study something, you transcend any cell you're inside of". Do you understand what the Researcher is saying? Furthermore, Molina's attitudes toward men, like his attitude towards films, are one of complete surrender of self.

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Having set up the traditional polarities that we saw were operative in Douglas's work (masculinity = production and work; femininity = consumption and passivity), Puig proceeds to effect a transvaluation of the terms. The project of the novel is to get Valentin to accept the otherness that Molina represents- femininity, homosexuality, and mass culture - and, ultimately to allow himself to be sexually and textually seduced by Molina, whom he calls "the spider woman." The spider woman is featured in the drug-induced dream Valentin has at the end of the book: at first, she appears to Valentin to be trapped in a spider's web, but then it becomes clear that the spider's web is growing out of her own body, "the threads are coming out of her waist and hips, they're part of her body, so many threads that look like hairy ropes and disgust me, even though if I were to touch them they might feel as smooth as who knows what, but it makes me queasy to touch them" (p.280). The description of the spider woman, an image of femininity and of homosexuality taken from mass culture, suggests what is at stake in Valentin's attitude toward his others: the fear of entrapment and absorption, which is simultaneously desired and dreaded.

Throughout the novel Puig is satirizing traditional Marxism in the figure of Valentin, and in both the narrative and the accompanying footnotes the book indicates that a revolution must occur in the personal realm as well as the political and must be concerned with sex and gender as well as class. For Marxism, which is classically preoccupied with production, this sexual revolution would involve a new and more positive attitude towards consumption. Hence, the book's obsessive concern with food. Valentin at first resists being nurtured by Molina, as he resists the film stories.

There's no way I can live for the moment because my life is dedicated to political struggle.... Social revolution, that's what's important, and gratifying the sense is only secondary. The great pleasure's something else, it's knowing I've put myself in the service of a noble...ideology...Marxism.... And I can get that pleasure anywhere, right here in this cell and even in torture. (pp. 27-28)

One of the ironies of Valentin's manifesto is his lack of awareness that his machismo contains strong elements of passively and even masochism (pleasure in torture). As for Molina, his identification with the passive and often masochistic heroines of his films, his swooning rapture over the films he describes, would appear to make him the ideal manipulated consumer. "You have to do it that way with the public, otherwise they're not satisfied. On the radio, they always used to do that to you. And now, on the T.V. soap" (pp.25-26).

And, as we have seen, Baudrillard, unlike Douglas, is far from denigrating the putative femininity of mass culture. It is the mute acquiescence of the masses to the system -the silence of the majority - that renders them most feminine. Baudrillard here is extending contemporary psychoanalytic definitions of women to a political analysis of the masses. For in current theory it is woman who has been consigned to silence because of her inability to pass through the mirror stage, to enter language, the symbolic and the social.

Declaring the masses to be the ruin of (political) representation, Baudrillard rather gleefully and apocalyptically proclaims the death of the social. In former times, "the devises of classic sociality" ensured that "social meaning still flows between one pole and another."

Baudrillard's work has recently had an enormous impact not only on mass culture theory but on art criticism as well. Baudrillard has been received by many as a kind of ultimate authority, a guru, and his disciples exhibiting an "excessive fidelity" to his theory that, not surprisingly, does nothing to "annul" its power. Feminists disturbed by contemporary theory's (especially Lacanian theory's) relegation of women to the realm of the presocial might be tempted to rejoice prematurely in the end of social and the consignment of almost everyone to the place hitherto reserved for women, but that would be to gloss over crucial distinctions. The authorizing function of its own discourse authorizes the "end of woman"

without consulting her. What matter who's speaking? I would answer that it matters, for example, to women who have lost and still routinely lose their proper name in marriage and whose signature... has not been worth the paper it was written on; women for whom signature-by virtue of its power in the world of circulation - is not immaterial. Only those who have it can play with not having it.
The death of the social is another of phallocentrism's masks, likewise authorizing the "end of woman" without consulting her: "the social itself no longer has any name. Anonymous- the mass/the masses" Only those who have privileged access to the social can gleefully announce its demise. For women, who throughout most of history have not been given political representation or a political voice - a state of affairs that has made them the true silent majority – there is little reason to be sanguine about the possibilities of a revolution based on the mute tactics of the eternal "feminine."

Not the least of the problems involved in equating the masses and mass culture with the feminine is that it becomes much more difficult for women to interrogate their role within that culture. As Freud put it in his essay on "Femininity" (employing patriarchal strategies of deviousness that would be discussed in the later stages of the chapter in greater detail), if women are the question, they cannot ask the questions. And yet it is crucial for us to ask them, because, as feminist critics have shown, women are victimized in many and complex ways in mass culture. Valentin was undoubtedly right the first time: the spider woman was in fact entrapped in that web, as almost all the women in the movies Molina discusses are ensnared in various patriarchal traps, and as Molina himself is destroyed at the end' letting "himself be killed because that way, he could die like some heroine in a movie"(p.279).

Despite the suggestion in **Kiss of the Spider Woman** of a reversal and a shift in power dynamics-with Molina, temporarily in the ascendancy, a result of his feminine strategies, which are also the strategies of the consumer-nothing much ever really changes. Throughout, Molina remains in the feminine role of nurturer and caretaker, while Valentin reaps all the benefits of consumerism. A feminist approach to mass culture might begin, then, by recognizing and challenging the dubious sexual analogies that pervade a wide variety of discourses, however seductive they may at first appear. It is through such an illustrative analysis that the Researcher wants to prove how femininity becomes a **Mas(s)querade** with its varied questionable extensions.

Femininity and Representation

(Dora— Fragment of an Analysis)

The word femininity is understood only as an extension of the body, which is there in the process of speaking ....To the extent that it does not know repression, femininity is the downfall of interpretation.
[Michele Montrelay, 'Inquiry Into femininity,' m/f 1, 1978, p.89.]
The below analyzed sequence-is the body of Dora which speaks pain, desire, speaks a force divided and contained.
[Helene Cixous, Portrait de Dora (Paris 1976), p. 36.]

What would it mean to reopen the case of Dora now?[75] The quotations above point to an urgency that is nothing less than that of the present dialogue between psychoanalysis and feminism, a dialogue that seems crucial and yet constantly slides away from the point of a

75 This essay was first published in m/f 2, 1978, pp.5-21;it was reprinted in In Dora's Case, Freud, Hysteria, Feminism, eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, New York and London 1985.

possible encounter, psychoanalysis attempting to delimit an area that might be called femininity within the confines of the drive, within a theory of sexuality that constantly places and displaces the concept of sexual difference, feminism starting precisely from that difference which it then addresses to psychoanalysis as a demand, the demand for the theory of its construction. Feminism, therefore, first turns to psychoanalysis because it is seen as the best place to describe the coming into being of femininity, which, in a next stage, it can be accused of producing or at least reproducing, sanctioning somehow within its own discourse. Quite simply, the case of Dora is seen to fail because Dora is repressed as a woman by psychoanalysis and what is left of Dora as somehow retrievable is the insistence of the body as feminine, and since it is a case of hysteria, in which the symptom speaks across the body itself, the feminine is placed not only as source (origin and exclusion) but also as manifestation (the symptom). Within this definition, hysteria is assimilated to a body as site of the feminine, outside discourse, silent finally, or, at best, 'dancing'.

What the Researcher wants to do through this reference, is to look at some of these difficulties through the case of Dora-not simply to accuse the case of its failure, which failure must, however, be described and interrogated; not to produce an alternative reading whose content would be the feminine; but nonetheless, to bring out some of the problems of the case precisely as the problem of the feminine within psychoanalysis in its urgency for us now. To do this will involve a discussion of the case itself, how its failure relates to changes in the concept of sexuality, and how these changes, which come at least partly in response to that failure, make certain conceptions of the feminine problematic.

The analysis falls into three parts: (1) the failure of the case, its relation to Freud's concept of femininity;(2) the relation of changes in the concept of femininity to changes in that of analytic practice (transference), and then to the concept of the unconscious it its relation to representation (hysterical and schizophrenic language); and (3) how these changes make impossible any notion of the feminine that would be outside representation,[76] the failure of the case of Dora being precisely the failure to articulate the relation between these two terms.

The Case of Dora

The case of Dora was first drafted under the title "Dreams and Hysteria" in 1901, the year after the publication of **The Interpretation of Dreams** .Yet it did not appear until 1905, in the same year as the **Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality**. The space between the two dates is punctuated by Freud's own comments on his hesitancy regarding a case that had promised so much, that he had in fact promised as nothing less than the sequel to The Interpretation of Dreams, as the link between clinical practice and dream analysis, between the etiology of the symptom and the primary process. The history of the case, its hesitancy, in this sense speaks for itself, for it is caught quite literally between those two aspects of Freud's work, the theory of the unconscious and the theory of sexuality, whose relation or distance is what still concerns us today, as if the case of Dora could only appear finally at the point where the implications of its failure had already been displaced onto a theory of sexuality, by no means complete and still highly problematic, but at least acknowledged as such. Dora then falls, or fails, in the space between these two texts, and Freud himself writes: "While the case history before us seems particularly favoured as regards the utilization of dreams, in other respects it has turned out poorer than I could have wished".[77]

76 See Parveen Adams, 'Representation and Sexuality', m/f 1, 1978.

77 Sigmund Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (Dora)' (1905), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works *(SE)*, London 1955-74,SE 7,p.11; The Pelican Freud Library (PF), Harmondsworth 1976-85,PF8,p. 40.

What then was wrong with Dora? First, in the simple sense of diagnosis and/or symptom, leaving aside at this very question that psychoanalysis set out (rejection of hysteria as an independent clinical entity).[78] Dora, at this stage the question of the status of the diagnostic category itself, not forgetting however
that it was from then, as first presented or brought to Freud, was suffering from tussis nervosa and periodic attacks of aphonia (nervous cough and loss of voice), possibly migraines, together with depression, hysterical unsociability, and a taedium vitae which was probably not entirely genuine'.[79] The symptoms are so slight, in a sense, that Freud feels it necessary to excuse to the reader, the attention he is to give to the case, the status he is granting it as exemplary of a neurotic disorder whose etiology he sets himself to describe.

Freud explicitly states that, where the etiology of the case stalled, he appeals to other cases to fill in the gaps, always indicating the point at which 'the authentic part ends and my (the Researcher's too) construction begins'.[80]

To give a history of the case, is therefore impossible, but a number of central points can be disengaged, that the Researcher hopes, will be of help in the discussion to follow:[81]

1. The parameters of the case are defined by the sexual circuit that runs between Dora's parents and their 'intimate' friends, Herr and Frau K., in which Dora herself is caught.
2. Thus, Dora is courted by Herr K., and the crisis that leads to the treatment is partly precipitated by an attempted seduction on his part, which she repudiates.
3. Behind this is the affair between Dora's father and Frau K.; behind this, crucially, the absence of Dora's mother in her relationship both to Dora ('unfriendly')[82] and to Dora's father (hence his relationship with Frau K.).

Put at its most crude, Freud's interpretation of the case is based on a simple identification of the Oedipal triangle, and starts with Dora's protest at her place in the relationship between Frau K. and her father, that is, with Dora as a pawn who is proffered to Herr K.
Thus her repudiation of the latter is the inevitable consequence of an outrage that takes Herr K. as its immediate object, and yet behind which is the figure of the father, who is the object of real reproach. In this way Dora's rejection of Herr K., still quite young and of prepossessing appearance' (sic)[83] can be seen as simultaneously Oedipal and hysterical (repudiation of her own desire). Dora's own desire is defined here as unproblematic – heterosexual and genital. At this stage Freud was still bound to the traumatic theory of neurosis, and he thus traces the repudiation on the part of Dora to an attempted embrace by Herr K. when she was fourteen, which was also repulsed - 'the behaviour of this child of fourteen was already entirely and completely hysterical'[84] In his analysis of Dora's first dream, there is no doubt that Freud interprets it as a summoning up of an infantile affection for the father, secondarily, as a defense against Dora's persistent and unquestioned desire for

78 Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, Studies on Hysteria (1893-95), SE2, p. 259; PF 3, p.342

79 Dora, p.24; p. 54.
80 Ibid, p.12; p. 41.

81 For a fuller discussion of the sequence of this case see Jacques Lacan, 'Intervention on Transference'.

82 Dora, p.20; p. 50.

83 Ibid., p.29n:p.60n.

84 Ibid., p.28;p.59.

Herr K. (The second dream is then interpreted as revealing the vengeance/hostility against her father that could not achieve expression in the first.)

Furthermore, Dora's symptom, her cough, reveals an unmistakable identification with her father, a masculine identification, confirmed by the appearance of her brother at three points in the case history – each time as the object of identification, whether as recollection, screen memory, or manifest content of the dream. The revealing of this masculine identification leads directly to the uncovering of the 'true' object of Dora's jealousy (made clear if for no other reason by the overinsistence of her reproaches against her father), that is, Frau K. herself, with whom Dora had shared such intimacy, secrecy, and confessions, even about Frau K.'s unsatisfactory relationship with her husband – in which case, Freud asks, how on earth could Dora in fact be in love with Herr K.? We may well ask.

What we therefore have in the case is a series of contradictions, which Freud then attempts to resolve by a mandatory appeal to the properties of the unconscious itself ('thoughts in the unconscious live very comfortably side by side, and even contraries get on together without disputes'),[85] revealing a theory of interpretation actually functioning as 'resistance' to the pressing need to develop a theory of sexuality, whose complexity or difficulty manifests itself time and again in the case. Thus, in his analysis of the hysterical symptom – aphonia, or loss of voice – Freud is forced towards the beginnings of a concept of component sexuality (a sexuality multiple and fragmented and not bound to the genital function), since the symptom is clearly not only the response to the absence to Herr K. (impossibility of the communication desired) but also a fantasized identification with a scene of imagined sexual satisfaction between Dora's father and Frau K. This is the fullest discussion of sexuality in the book, which anticipates many of the theses of the three Essays, but it is conducted by Freud as an apology for Dora (and himself) – a justification of the discussion of sexual matters with a young girl (the question therefore being that of censorship, Freud's discovery reduced to the articulation of sexuality to a woman) and then as insistence on the perverse and undifferentiated nature of infantile sexuality so that Dora's envisaging of a scene of oral gratification – for that is what it is – might be less of a scandal.

The difficulties therefore clearly relate to the whole concept of sexuality, and not just to the nature of the object, but Freud's own resistance appears most strongly in relation to Frau K.'s status as an object of desire for Dora. It is her second dream that the identification of Dora with a man (her own suitor) is unquestionable, and since the analysis reveals a latent obsession with the body of the woman, the Madonna, defloration, and finally childbirth, the recuperation of a primary autoeroticism (the masturbation discerned behind the first dream) by masculine fantasy of self-possession now charted across the question of sexual difference is clear.[86] The way this dream raises the question of sexual difference will be discussed below. Note for the moment that Freud is so keen to hang onto a notion of genital heterosexuality that it leads him, first to identify the fantasy of childbirth that analysis revealed behind the second dream as an obscure 'maternal longing'[87] outdoing in advance Karen Horney's appeals to such a longing as natural, biological and pregiven in her attacks on Freud's later work on femininity; and second, to classify Dora's masculine identification and desire for Frau K.

85 Ibid., p.61;p.96.

86 Note Freud's discussion of this dream: 'What was most evident was that in the first part of the dream she was identifying herself with a young man – it would have been appropriate for the goal top have been the possession of a woman, of herself. (Ibid,'pp.96-97; pp.116-117.)

87 Ibid., p.104n;p.145n.

Freud himself attributes the failure of the case to his failure in 'mastering the transference in good time'[88], while his constant footnoting of this discussion with references to his overlooking the homosexual desire of this patient indicates that the relation between these two aspects of the case remains unformulated. At one level it is easy that Freud's failure to understand his own implication in the case (counter transference), produced a certain definition of sexuality as a demand on Dora, which, it should be noted, she rejects (walks out).[89] The concept of a possible recovery from neurosis through reality and that of an unproblematic feminine sexuality are coincident in the case.

'Homosexuality in a woman'[90], and in one sense the step from the failure of the case of Dora to this case, which appeared in 1920, is irresistible— not, however, in order to classify Dora as homosexual in any simple sense, but precisely because in this case Freud was led to an acknowledgement of the homosexual factor in all feminine sexuality, an acknowledgement which was to lead to his revision of his theories of the Oedipus complex for the girl. For in this article he is in a way at his most radical, rejecting the concept of cure, insisting that the most psychoanalysis can do is restore the original bisexual disposition of the patient, defining homosexuality as nonneurotic.

The temptation is therefore to see the case of Dora as anticipating, through the insistence of Dora's desire for Frau K. as substitute for the absent mother in the case ('the mystery turns upon your mother'[91], Freud says in relation to the first dream), the nature of the preoedipal attachment between mother and girl child, an attachment Freud finally makes specific to feminine sexuality in its persistence and difficulty. All recent work on the concept of a feminine sexuality that resists or exceeds the reproductive or genital function stems from this, and since the Oedipus complex is properly the insertion of the woman into the circuit of symbolic exchange (nothing could be clearer in the case of Dora), then her resistance to this positioning is assigned a radical status. The woman, therefore, is outside exchange, an exchange put into play or sanctioned by nothing other than language itself, which thus produces the question of her place and her language simultaneously. The transition to a concept of hysterical discourse as some privileged relation to the maternal body is then easy; it is partly supported by Freud's own 'suspicion' that 'this phase of attachment to the mother is especially intimately related to the aetiology of hysteria, which is not surprising when we reflect that both the phase and the neurosis are characteristically feminine'.[92]

What seems to happen is that the desire to validate the preoedipal instance as resistance to the oedipal structure itself leads to a 'materialization' of the bodily relation that underpins it, so that the body of the mother, or more properly the girl's relation to it, is then placed as being somehow outside repression. What we then have is a constant assimilation in feminist texts of the maternal body and the unrepressed (see Montrelay, quoted at the beginning of this chapter), or of the maternal body and the dream (Kristeva: 'different, close to the dream or the maternal body'), or of the maternal body and a primary autoeroticism (Irigaray) whose return would apparently mean

88 Ibid., p.118;p.160.

89 Ibid., p. 110;p.152.

90 Freud, 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of homosexuality in Woman' (1920),SE 18; PF 9

91 Dora, p.70; p. 105.

92 Freud, 'Female Sexuality' (1931), SE21, p.227; PF7, p.373

the return of the (feminine) exile.[93] In the case of Kristeva, the relation to differing modes of language is made explicit to the point of identifying a preoedipal linguistic register (rhythms, intonations) and a postoedipal linguistic register (the phonologico - syntactic structure of the sentence). Hysteria, therefore, and the poetic language of the woman (which becomes the language of woman poets, Woolf, Plath, etc.) are properly then the return of this primary and bodily mode of expressivity.[94] It is in a sense a feminist version of Laing, but having to include the transference neurosis (hysteria) since the relation of the latter to the feminine is too heavily attested to be ignored. More often than not, the two forms are assimilated the one to the other, so that what happens is that the specificity of the two types of disorder is lost.

A few points about Dora first. As we saw above, Dora's bodily symptoms (the aphonia, the cough) are the expression of a masculine identification, through which identification alone access to the maternal and feminine body is possible. This access then threatens Dora with a physical or bodily fragmentation, which constitutes the symptoms of conversion.

Second, in the second dream, in which Dora's desire could be defined as the desire for self-possession, her position as subject is as its most precarious. The dream most clearly articulates the split between the subject and object of enunciation at the root of any linguistic utterance (the speaking subject and the subject of the statement) [95], here seen in its relation to the question of sexual difference. Thus, if Dora is there to be possessed, then she is not there as a woman (she is a man), and if she is not there to be possessed, her place as a woman is assured (she remains feminine) but she is not there (Lacan's lethal vel).[96]

Perhaps we should remember here that Freud's work on hysteria started precisely with a rejection of any simple mapping of the symptom onto the body (Charcot's hysterogenic Zones). By doing so he made of hysteria, a language (made it speak) but one whose relation to the body was decentered, since if the body spoke it was precisely because there was something called the unconscious that could not. At this point the relation of dreams and hysteria, from which we started out, can be reasserted as nothing other than inflection of the body through language in its relation to the unconscious (indirect representation). When Lacan writes that 'there is nothing in the unconscious which accords with the body', he

93 Julia Kristeva, Des Chinoises, Paris 1974, p. 34 (tr. Anita Barrows, About Chinese Women, London and New York 1977, p.29); Luce Irigaray, Speculum de l'autre femme, Paris 1974 (tr. Gillian Gill, Speculum of the Other Woman, Ithaca 1985). For a fuller discussion of the work of Jullia Kristeva, see 'Julia Kristeva—Take Two' in this collection.

94 It can also be objected to these arguments that they reproduce the classical definition of woman/the feminine as irrational, outside discourse, language, etc., with clearly reactionary implications for women. For discussion of this, see Monique Plaza, 'Pouvoir "phallomorphique" et psychologie de "la Femme" ', Questions feministes 1, 1977 (tr.' "Phallomorphic" Power and the Psychology of "Women"- A patriarchal Chain', Ideology and Consciousness 4, 1978).

95 This is the linguistic distinction between the subject of the enunciation or statement and the subject of the enunciated or utterance. See Emile Benveniste, 'De La subjectivite dans le langage', Problemes de linguistique generale. Paris 1966 (tr. 'Subjectivity in Language', Problems in General Linguistics, Miami 1971). It is a distinction I deliberately reformulate here. For a discussion of the concept for psychoanalysis, see Lacan, 'Analyse et verite ou la fermeture de l'inconscient', Le seminarie XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse,(1964), Paris 1973 (tr. Alan Sheridan, 'Analysis and Truth or Closure of the Unconscious', The Four Fundamental concepts of Psychoanalysis, London 1977, New York, 1978).

96 See Adams, p.72.

means this, and he continues: 'The unconscious is discordant'.[97] We saw this above in the split between subject and object of enunciation, Dora as subject literally fading before her presence in the dream.

Word-presentations and Thing-presentations

Freud's discussion of schizophrenic and hysterical language is at its most explicit in his metapsychological paper on the unconscious.[98] That this discussion should take up the chapter entitled 'Assessment of the Unconscious' indicates its importance, and it is in fact the distinction between these two types of disorder that produces Freud's definition of the concept ucs (the unconscious in his system: unconscious, preconscious, and conscious). Freud starts with schizophrenia in its inaccessibility to analysis, involving as it does a complete withdrawal of object-cathexes in their reversion to the ego. What then appears as symptoms is what Freud calls organ-speech, in which 'the patient's relation to a bodily organ [arrogates] to itself the representation of the whole content [of her thoughts]'.[99]

It is on the collapse of this concept, in Freud's text itself, that the assimilation schizophrenia/body, unconscious can again be seen to fail. First, Freud does in fact state even within this definition that what is involved in the first (primary) cathexes of the object is the memory-trace of the object, and in the appendix on aphasia he states the relation between object and thing-presentation to be a mediate one. The schizophrenic's relation to the word, would therefore reveal at its most transparent, the loss of the object that is at root of linguistic representation ('These endeavours are directed towards regaining the lost object').[100]

A number of conceptions about language which underpins discussion about the feminine and discourse, the feminine as discourse can now be disengaged. First, the idea of an unmediated relation between the body and language is contrary to the linguistic definition of the sign, implying as it does a type of anatomical mimesis of language on the body (for example, Irigaray's 'two lips' as indicating the place of woman outside (phallo-) monistic discourse), discussed by the Researcher in her preceding chapter. Second, the concept of the feminine as outside discourse involves a theory of language in which a nonexcentric relation to language would be possible, the subject as control and origin of meaning, which is to render meaningless both the concept of the unconscious and that of the subject. It is on this latter factor that the relation of psychoanalysis to language exceeds that of linguistics, precisely insofar as it poses this problem of the subject's relation to discourse. Freud did not formulate this as such, but it is there in the contradictions of his text, in this further sense, too, and most clearly, the Researcher would suggest, in what he has to say about feminine sexuality and transference— which brings us back to the case of Dora.

The Question of Femininity:-

In this final section, the Researcher wants to look at the two 'vanishing points' of the case of Dora— the theory of feminine sexuality and the concept of transference. What the Researcher wants to do here, therefore, is to show how in both of these concepts something of the subject's relation to discourse as we saw it emerging above - in Dora's second dream, and then in the schizophrenic relation to the word - can be discerned and to suggest the pertinence of that theory for discussion of the feminine not as discourse but, within discourse, as a relationship to it.

97 Lacan, 'Seminaire du 21 janvier, 1975', Ornicar? (Bulletin periodique du champ freudien), 3 May 1975, p.105 (tr. In Feminine Sexuality, p.165).

98 Freud 'The Unconscious', Papers in Metapsychology (1914), SE 14; PF11.

99 Ibid., p. 198;p. 203.

100 Ibid., p.204; p.209 (my italics).

First, the transference, as it was elaborated by Freud in his papers on technique ('The Dynamics of Transference', 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through', 'Observations on Transference-Love'), [101] where he starts again with a definition of neurosis as a libidinal turning away from reality, is first seen as a resistance in the chain of associations that would lead logically to the repairing or completing of the patient's memory. Dora's case also started, in Freud's discussion of the fragment, with this insistence that cure of the symptom and completion of memory were synonymous — psychoanalysis being defined here as the creation of a full history to which the subject would be restored. It is a concept also present at the beginning of Lacan's work on the idea of full speech,[102] retranscription of the history of the patient through language, before the development of the concept of the unconscious precisely as the effects of language, and hence behind it a moment of failing that can never be restored, that is nothing other than that of the subject itself (primary repression).

Yet, taken together, these three texts inscribe an opposite movement, in the discussion of recollection ('Remembering, Repeating, and Working- Through'). In fact, in his article on the two principles of mental functioning, [103] Freud assigned to fantasy the whole domain of sexuality, whereby it escapes the reality principle altogether (pleasure in sexuality revealing itself as pleasure in the act of representation itself).[104]

What this indicates of this discussion, is that Freud himself was forced to correct or to revise the concept of transference to which he ascribed the failure of the case of Dora. Note the proximity of these terms to the query, image, Bild, of Dora's second dream, sexuality precisely not as demand (the demand for love) but as question.

In the discussion of the case itself, the Researcher suggests that Freud's concept of the transference as the retrieval of an event corresponded to the concept of a pregiven normal feminine sexuality, neurosis being defined as the failure to meet a 'real erotic demand'. Thus if the concept of reality has to go in relation to the notion of transference, we can reasonably assume that it also goes in relation to that of sexuality itself. The Researcher has already suggested briefly that it does, in what Freud says about the pleasure principle. What is important to grasp is that, while it is undoubtedly correct to state that Freud's analysis of Dora failed because of the theory of feminine sexuality to which he then held, this concept cannot be corrected by a simple reference to his later theses on feminine sexuality (preoedipality, etc.), crucial as these may be, since that is simply to replace one content with another, whereas what must be seen in Freud's work on femininity is exactly the same movement we have just seen in the concept of transference, which is nothing less than the collapse of the category of sexuality as content altogether.

Freud starts both his papers on femininity ('Female Sexuality' and 'Femininity') with recognition of the girl's preoedipal attachment to the mother, its strength and duration, as it had been overlooked within psychoanalytic theory, thus feminine sexuality as an earlier stage, a more repressed content, something archaic.

101 All in Freud, papers on Technique (1911-15), SE 12.

102 Lacan, 'Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse' (1953), Ecrits, Paris 1966 (tr. Alan Sheridan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', Ecrits: A Selection, London and New York 1977).

103 Freud, 'Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning' (1911), SE12; PF11.

104 See Moustapha Safouan, L'echec du principe du plaisir, Paris 1979 (tr. Ben Brewster, Pleasure and Being, Hedonism from a Psychoanalytic Points of View, London 1983).

'Female Sexuality' (1931) starts with the preodipal factor and its necessary relinquishment, which is then discussed in terms of the castration complex and penis envy. But this does not exhaust the question of the girl's renunciation of her mother, a question that then persists in a series of references to 'premature' weaning, the advent of a rival, the necessary frustration and final ambivalence of the child's demand for love. [105]

Freud can only answer this question by reference to the nature of the infantile sexual aim – its activity (rejection of a male/female biological chemistry, a single libido with both active and passive aims), an activity that is not only a corrective to the idea of a naturally passive femininity but functions as repetition (the child repeats a distressing experience through play).

In 'femininity' (1933), the sequence is in a sense reversed. The paper starts with the caution against the biological definition of sexual difference and then reposes the question of the girl's relinquishment of the preoedipal attachment to the mother. The motives for renunciation are listed again – oral frustration, jealousy, prohibition, ambivalence – but in this case the question of how these can explain such renunciation when they apply equally to the boy is answered with the concept of penis envy, with which the question is in a sense closed (the discussion moves on to a consideration of adult modes of feminine sexuality). Thus the question is answered here, and it is as answer that the concept of penis envy has produced, rightly, the anger against Freud. For looking at the paper again, it is clear that nothing has been answered at all, since Freud characterizes each of the earlier motives specifically in terms of its impossibility (see above): oral demand as 'insatiable', 'a child's demands for love are immoderate' (rivalry), "multifarious sexual wishes ... which cannot for the most part be satisfied', 'the immoderate character of the demand for love and the impossibility of fulfilling their sexual wishes'.[106] Now, if what characterizes all these demands is the impossibility of their satisfaction, then the fact that there is another impossible demand ('the wish to get the longed-for penis')[107] cannot strictly explain anything at all, other than the persistence of the demand itself – the question, therefore, of the earlier paper, 'What does the little girl require of her mother?'[108]

What Freud's papers on femininity reveal, therefore, is nothing less than the emergence of this concept of desire as the question of sexual difference: how does the little girl become a woman, or does she?

To return to dreams and hysteria, isn't this exactly the question that reveals itself in the dream of the hysteric analyzed in The Interpretation of Dreams[109]who dreamt that her own wish was not fulfilled, through an identification with the woman she posited as her sexual rival? Her desire, therefore, is the desire for an unsatisfied desire: 'She likes caviar,' writes Lacan, 'but she doesn't want any. This can be referred directly back to the case of Dora, woman as object and subject of desire – the impossibility of either position, for if object of desire then whose desire, and if subject of desire then its own impossibility, the impossibility of subject and desire (the one implying the fading of the other). Thus, Dora

105 Ibid., p.235; p.383.

106 Freud, 'Femininity' (1933), New Introductory Lectures, SE 22, pp. 122-124; PF2, pp.156-157.

107 Ibid., p.125; p.159.

108 See 'La sexualite feminine dans la doctrine psychanalytique', scilicet, Revue du champ freudien 5, 1975. reprinted as chapter 1 of Moustapha Safouan, La sexualite feminine dans la doctrine freudienne, Paris 1976 (tr.'Feminine Sexuality in Psychoanalytic Doctrine' in Feminine Sexuality)

109 Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), SE 4-5, pp. 147-151,228; PF 4, pp.229-233, 260-261.

rejects Herr K. at the exact moment when he states that he does not desire his own wife, the very woman through whom the whole question for Dora was posed (the scene at the lake).

Thus, what feminine sexuality reveals in these examples, is the persistence of the question of desire as a question (exactly the opposite of the feminine as sexual content, substance, or whatever). Finally, to return to the hysterical symptom itself:

It is to the extent that a need gets caught up in the function of desire that the psychosomatic can be conceived of as something more than the idle commonplace, which consists in saying that there is a psychic backing to everything somatic. That much we have known for a long time. If we speak of the psychosomatic it is insofar as what must intervene is desire.[110]

What seems to need attention is precisely this movement of psychoanalysis away from sexuality as content (preoedipal or otherwise) to a concept of sexuality as caught up in the register of demand and desire. What does emerge from the above, is that it was on the failings in the concept of the feminine (the case of Dora) that this problem emerged in Freud's own work. To relinquish the idea of a specific feminine discourse may be less discouraging, if what it leads to, is work on the place of the feminine as some how revealing more urgently, the impossibility of the position of the woman within a discourse that would prefer to suppress the question of desire as such (the question of its splitting). The Researcher thus suggests, that the case of Dora reveals no more, and no less, than this.

Female Sexuality (1931)

Sigmund Freud

During the phase of the normal Oedipus complex we find the child tenderly attached to the parent of the opposite sex, while its relation to the parent of its own sex is predominantly hostile. In the case of a boy, there is no difficulty in explaining this. His first love-object was his mother. With the small girl it is different. Her first object, too, was her mother. How does she find her way to her father? How, when and why does she detach herself from her mother? The way in which the two tasks are connected with each other is not yet clear to us.

It is well known that there are many women who have a strong attachment to their father; nor need they be in any way neurotic. It is upon such women that the Researcher has made the observations, which she proposes to report here and have led her to adopt a particular view of female sexuality. The Researcher is struck, above all, by two facts. The first is that where the women's attachment to her father is particularly intense, analysis showed that it had been preceded by a phase of exclusive attachment to her mother, which had been equally intense and passionate. Except for the change of her love-object, the second phase had scarcely added any new feature to her erotic life. Her primary relation to her mother had been built up in a very rich and many-sided manner. The second fact taught the Researcher that the *duration* of this attachment had also been greatly underestimated. Indeed, we have to reckon with the possibility that a number of women remain arrested in their original attachment to their mother and never achieve a true changeover towards men. This being so, the pre-Oedipus phase in women gains an importance, which we have not attributed to it hitherto.

But if anyone feels reluctant about making this correction, there is no need for him to do so.[111] Indeed during that phase a little girl's father is not much else for her than a troublesome rival, although her hostility towards him never reaches the pitch, which is

110 The Four Fundamental Concepts, p.228 (tr. modified).

111 [The positive and negative Oedipus complexes were discussed by Freud in Chapter III of The Ego and the Id (1923), Standard Ed., 19, 33]

characteristic of boys. We have, after all, long given up any expectation of a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development.

Everything in the sphere of this first attachment to the mother seemed to the Researcher so difficult to grasp in analysis - so grey with age and shadowy and almost impossible to revivify - that it was as if it had succumbed to an especially inexorable repression. But perhaps the Researcher gained this impression because the women who were in analysis came from a background in which girls generally cling to the very attachment of the father in which they taken refuge from the early phase, that is in question. Nor has the Researcher succeeded in seeing her way through any case completely, and the Researcher shall therefore confine herself to reporting the most general findings and shall give only a few examples of the new ideas which the Researcher has arrived at.[112] For this germ appears to be the surprising, yet regular, fear of being killed (devoured?) by the mother.[113]

II

The Researcher begins here by stating the two facts which have struck her as new: that a woman's strong dependence on her father merely takes over the heritage of an equally strong attachment to her mother, and that this earlier phase has lasted for an unexpected long period of time. The Researcher will now go back a little in order to insert these new findings into the picture of female sexual-development with which we are familiar. It will help our exposition if, as we go along, we compare the state of things in women with that in men.

First of all, there can be no doubt that the bisexuality, which is present as we believe, in the innate disposition of human beings, comes to the fore much more clearly in women than in men. A man, after all, has only one leading sexual zone, one sexual organ, whereas a woman has two: the vagina- the female organ proper- and the clitoris, which is analogous to the male organ. In women, therefore, the main genital occurrences of childhood must take place in relation to the clitoris. Their sexual life is regularly divided into two phases, of which the first has a masculine character, while only the second is specifically feminine. Thus, in female development there is a process of transition from the one phase to the other, to which there is nothing analogous in the male.

Parallel with the first great difference there is the other, concerned with the finding of the object. A female's first object, too, must be her mother: the primary conditions for a choice of object are, of course, the same for all children. But at the end of her development, her father - a man - should have becomes her new love-object. In other words, to the change in her own sex there must correspond a change in the sex of her object.

One thing that is left over in men from the influence of the Oedipus complex, is a certain amount of disparagement in their attitude towards women, whom they regard as being castrated. In extreme case this gives rise to an inhibition in their choice of object, if it is supposed by organic factors, to exclusive homosexuality.

Quite different are the effects of the castration complex in the female. **From this divided attitude three lines of development open up. The first leads to a general revulsion from sexuality. The little girl, frightened by the comparison with boys, grows dissatisfied with her clitoris, and gives up her phallic activity and with it her sexuality in general as well as a good part of he masculinity in other fields. The second line leads her to cling with defiant self-assertiveness to her threatened masculinity. To an incredibly late age she clings to the hope of getting a penis some time. This 'masculinity**

112 In the well-known case of delusional jealousy reported by Ruth Mack Brunswick (1928), the direct source of the disorder was the patient's pre-Oedipus fixation (to her sister). [Cf. also Freud's own '<u>Case of Paranoia Running Contrary to the Psycho-Analytic Theory of the Disease</u>' (1915).]

113 [The girl's fear of being killed by her mother is discussed further above on p. 50.]

complex' in women can also result in a manifest homosexual choice of object. Only if her development follows the third, very circuitous, path does she reach the final normal female attitude, in which she takes her father as her object and so finds her way to the feminine form of the Oedipus complex. Thus in women the Oedipus complex is the end-result of a fairly lengthy development. We should probably not be wrong in saying that it is this difference in the reciprocal relation between the Oedipus and the castration complex, which gives its special stamp to the character of females as social beings. [114]

We see, then, that the phase of exclusive attachment to the mother, which may be called the pre-Oedipus phase, possesses a far greater importance in women than it can have in men. Many phenomena of female sexual life, which were not properly understood before, can be fully explained by reference to this phase. Long ago, for instance, we noticed that many women who have chosen their husband on the model of their father, or have put him in their father's place, nevertheless report towards him, in their married life, their bad relations with mother.[115] The husband of such a woman was meant to be the inheritor of her relation to her father, but in reality, he became the inheritor of her relation to her mother. This is easily explained as an obvious case of regression. Her relation to her mother was the original one, and her attachment to her father was built up on it, and now, in marriage, the original relation emerges from repression. For the main content of her development to womanhood lay in the carrying over of her affective object attachments from her mother to her father.

Our interest must be directed to the mechanisms that are at work in her turning away from the mother who was an object so intensely and exclusively loved. Another, much more specific motive for turning away from the mother arises from the effect of the castration complex on the creature who is without a penis. At some time or other the little girl makes the discovery of her organic inferiority -earlier and more easily, of course, if there are brothers or others boys about.

For instance, a girl may later construe the fact of castration as a punishment for her masturbatory activity, and she will attribute the carrying out of this punishment to her father, but neither of these ideas can be a primary one. Similarly, boys regularly fear castration from their father, although in their case, too, the threat most usually comes from their mother.
However this may be, at the end of this first phase of attachment to the mother, there emerges, as the girl's strongest motive for turning away from her, the reproach that her mother did not give her proper penis -that is to say, brought her into the world as a female.[116]

114 It is to be anticipated that men analysts with feminist views, as well as our women analysts, will disagree with what the Researcher has said here. They will hardly fail to object that such notions spring from the 'masculinity complex' of the male and are designed to justify on theoretical ground his innate inclination to disparage and suppress women. But this sort of psycho-analytic argumentation reminds us here, as it so often does, of Dostoevsky's famous 'knife that cuts both ways.' The opponents of those who argue in this way will on their side think it quite natural that the female sex should....* 7....*refuse.. to accept a view which appears to contradict their eagerly coveted equality with men. The use of analysis as a weapon of controversy can clearly lead to no decision. – [The Dostoevsky phrase (a simile applied to psychology) occurs in the speech for the defence in the account of Mitya's trial in Chapter X of Book XII of The Brothers Karamazou. Freud had quoted it already in his paper on 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928).... The actual simile used by Freud and in the Russian original is 'a stick with two ends'.]

115 [See 'The Taboo of Virginity' (1918), Standard Ed.,11, 204 ff.]

116 [Freud had pointed this out in the last paragraph of Section I of his paper on 'Some Character Types' (1916), Standard Ed., 14 315.]
[See Totem and Taboo (1912-13) passim, and especially the Second essay.]

A second reproach, which does not reach quite so far back, is rather a surprising one. It is that her mother did not give her enough milk, did not suckle her long enough. It is as though our children had remained forever unstated, as though they had never sucked long enough at their mother's breast. But I am not sure whether, if one analyzed children who had been suckled as long as the children of primitive peoples, one would not come upon the same complaint. Such is the greed of a child's libido!

When we survey the whole range of motives for turning away from the mother which analysis brings to light - that she failed to provide the little girl with the only proper genital, that she did not feed her sufficiently, that she compelled her to share her mother's love with others, that she never fulfilled all the girl's expectations of love, and finally that she first aroused her sexual activity and then forbade it- all these motives seem nevertheless insufficient to justify the girl's final hostility. In both situations the attitude of love probably comes to grief from the disappointments that are unavoidable and from the accumulation of occasions for aggression. As a rule, second marriage turns out much better.

In the first phases of erotic life, ambivalence is evidently the rule. Many people retain this archaic trait all through their lives. In primitive races, too, we man say that ambivalence predominates. We shall conclude, then, that the little girl's intense attachment to her mother is strongly ambivalent, and that it is in consequence precisely of this ambivalence that (with the assistance of the other factors we have adduced) her attachment is forced away from her mother - once again, that is to say, in consequence of a general characteristic of infantile sexuality.

The explanation the Researcher has attempted to give, is at once met by a question: 'How is it, then, that boys are able to keep intact their attachment to their mother, which is certainly no less strong than that of girls?' The answer comes equally promptly: 'Because boys are able to deal with their ambivalent feelings towards their mother by directing all their hostility on to their father.' But, in the first place, we ought not to make this reply until we have made a close study of the pre-Oedipal phase in boys, and, in the second place, it is probably more prudent in general to admit that we have as yet no clear understanding of these processes, with which we have only just become acquainted.

III

A further question arises: 'what does the little girl require of her mother? What is the nature of her sexual aims during the time of exclusive attachment to her mother?' The girl's sexual aims in regard to her mother are active as well as passive and are determined by the libidinal phases through which the child passes. Here the relation of activity to passivity is especially interesting. It can be observed that in every field of mental experience, not merely that of sexuality, when a child receives a passive impression it has a tendency to produce an active reaction.

The first sexual and sexually coloured experiences, which a child has in relation to its mother, are naturally of a passive character. It is suckled, fed, cleaned, and dressed by her, and taught to perform all its functions. A part of its libido goes on clinging to those experiences and enjoys the satisfactions bound up with them; but another part strives to turn them into activity. We seldom hear of a little girl's wanting to wash or dress her mother or tell her to perform her excretory functions. Sometimes, it is true, she says; 'Now let's play that I'm the mother and you're the child; 'but generally she fulfils these active wishes in an indirect way, in her play with her doll, in which she represents the mother and the doll the child. Not unjustly so; but we must not overlook the fact that finds expression here is the active side of femininity, and that the little girl's preference for dolls is probably the evidence of the exclusiveness of her attachment to her mother, with complete neglect of her father-object.

The very surprising sexual activity of little girls in relation to their mother is manifested chronologically in oral, sadistic, and finally even in phallic trends directed towards her. We find the little girl's aggressive oral and sadistic wishes in a form forced on them by early repression, as a fear of being killed by her mother- a fear which, in turn, justifies her death-wish against her mother, if that becomes conscious. It is impossible to say how often this fear of the mother is supported by an unconscious hostility on the mother's part which is sensed by the girl.[117] (Hitherto, it is only in men that the Researcher has found the fear of being eaten up. This fear is referred to the father, but it is probably the product of a transformation of oral aggressivity directed to the mother. The child wants to eat up its mother from whom it has had its nourishment; in the case of the father there is no such obvious determinant for the wish.)

The women patients showing a strong attachment to their mother in whom the Researcher has been able to study the pre-Oedipus phase have all told her that when their mother gave them enemas or rectal douches they used to offer the greatest resistance and react with fear and screams of rage.

In regard to the passive impulses of the phallic phase, it is noteworthy that girls regularly accuse their mother of seducing them. Mothers have often told the Researcher, as a matter of observation, that their little daughters of two and three years old enjoy these sensations and try to get their mothers to make them more intense by repeated touching and rubbing. The fact that the mother thus unavoidably initiates the child into the phallic phase is, the Researcher thinks, the reason why, in phantasies of later years, the father so regularly appears as the sexual seducer. When the girl turns away from the mother, she also makes over to her father, her introduction into sexual life.[118]

Lastly, intense active wishful impulses directed towards the mother also arise during the phallic phase. The sexual activity of this period culminates in clitoridal masturbation. This is probably accompanied by ideas of the mother, but whether the child attaches a sexual aim to the idea, and what that aim is, the Researcher has not been able to discover from her observations.

The turning-away from her mother is an extremely important step in the course of a little girl's development. It is more than a mere change of object. With the turning-away from the mother clitoridal masturbation frequently ceases as well; and often enough when the small girl represses her previous masculinity a considerable portion of her sexual trends in general is permanently injured too. The path to the development of femininity now lies open to the girl, to the extent to which it is not restricted by the remains of the pre-Oedipus attachment to her mother, which she has surmounted.

If we now survey the stage of sexual development in the female, which the Researcher has been describing, we cannot resist coming to a definite conclusion about female sexuality as a whole. Biological factors subsequently deflect those libidinal forces [in

117 [Cf. above, p.41.]

118 [This is the last phase of a long story. When, in his early analyses, Freud's hysterical patients told him that they had been seduced by their father in childhood, he accepted these tales as the truth and regarded the trauma as the cause if their illness. It was not long before he recognized his mistake, and he admitted it in a letter to Fliess of September 21, 1897 (Freud, 1950,Letter 69). He soon grasped the important fact that these apparently false memories were wishful phantasies, which pointed the way to the existence of the Oedipus complex. An account of his contemporary reactions to these discoveries is given in Chapter III of his Autobiographical Study (1925), Standard Ed., 20, 34-5. It was only in the present passage that Freud gave his full explanation of these ostensible memories. He discusses this whole episode at greater length in Lecture XXXIII of his New Introductory Lectures (1933).]

the girl's case] from their original aims and conduct even active and in every sense masculine trends into feminine channels.
Even in sexual chemistry things must be rather more complicated.[119] For psychology, however, it is a matter of indifference whether there is a single sexually exciting substance in the day or two or countless numbers of them. Psychoanalysis teaches us to manage with a single libido, which, it is true, has both active and passive aims (that is, modes of satisfaction).

IV

An examination of the analytic literature on the subject shows that every-thing that has been said by the Researcher here is already to be found in it. Moreover, there are a number of points, which the Researcher has defined more sharply and isolated more carefully. Also, in describing the various outcomes of this phase of development, the Researcher has refrained from discussing the complications which arise when a child, as a result of disappointment from her father, returns to the attachment to her mother which she had abandoned, or when, in the course of her life, she repeatedly changes over from one position to the other. But precisely because her thesis is only one contribution among others, the Researcher may be spared an exhaustive survey of the literature, and she can confine herself to bringing out the more important points on which she agrees or disagrees with these other writings.

Abraham's (1921) description of the manifestations of the castration complex in the female is still unsurpassed; but one would be glad if it had included the factor of the girl's original exclusive attachment to her mother. The Researcher is in agreement with the principal points in Jeanne Lampl-de-Groot's[120] (1927) important paper. In this the complete identity of the pre-Oedipus phase in boys and girls is recognized, and the girl's sexual (phallic) activity towards her mother is affirmed and substantiated by observations. The turning- away from the mother is traced to the influence of the girl's recognition of castration, which obliges her to give up her sexual object, and often masturbation along with it. The whole development is summed up in the formula that the girl goes through a phase of the 'negative' Oedipus complex before she can enter the positive one. A point on which the Researcher finds the writer's account inadequate is that it represents the turning-away from the mother as being merely a change of object and does not discuss the fact that it is accompanied by the plainest manifestations of hostility. Helene Deutsch (1930) states further that the girl's turning towards her father takes place via her passive trends (which have already been awakened in relation to her mother). In her earlier book (1925) the author had not yet set herself free from the endeavour to apply the Oedipus pattern to the pre-Oedipus phase, and she therefore interpreted the little girl's phallic activity as identification with her father.
Fenichel (1930) rightly emphasizes the difficulty of recognizing in the material produced in analysis what parts of it represent the unchanged content of the pre-Oedipus phase and what parts they have been distorted by regression (or in other ways). He rejects the 'displacement backwards' of the Oedipus complex proposed by Melanie Klein (1928), who places its beginning as early as the commencement of the second year of life. This dating of it, which would also necessarily imply a modification of our view of all the rest of the child's

119 [Cf. the discussion of the chemistry of the sexual processes added in 1920 to the Three Essays (1905), Standard Ed., 7, 215, where (in a footnote on the following page) the earlier version from the first edition of the book will also be found.]

120 The author's name was given when it appeared in the Zeitschrift as 'A. Lamp-de-Groot', and is corrected accordingly.

development, does not in fact correspond to what we learn from the analysis of adults, and it is especially in compatible with the Researcher's findings as to the long duration of the girl's pre-Oedipus attachment to her mother. He effect of seduction has long been familiar to us and in just the same way other factors - such as the date at which the child's brothers and sisters are born or the time when it discovers the difference between the sexes, or again its direct observation of sexual intercourse or its parents' behaviour in encouraging or repelling it - may hasten the child's sexual development and bring it to maturity.

It is undoubtedly true that there is an antithesis between the attachment to the father and the masculinity complex; it is the general antithesis that exists between activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity.

Femininity[121] (1933)

Sigmund Freud

All the while, the Researcher has prepared to write to pen the struggle of femininity with an internal difficulty. She feels uncertain, so to speak, of the extent to her licence. For analysts the Researcher is saying too little and nothing at all that is new; but for you the readers she is saying too much and saying things which you may not be equipped to understand and which are not in your province. Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the **nature of femininity** —

Haupter in Hieroglyphenmutzen,

Haupter in Turban und schwarzem Barett,

Peruckenhaupter und tausend Andre

Arme, schwitzende Menschenhaupter....[122]

Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem - those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply - you are yourselves the problem? When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty. The male sexual product, the spermatozoon, and its vehicle are male; the ovum and the organism that harbours it are female. Science draws your attentions to the fact that portions of the male sexual apparatus also appear in women's bodies, though in an atrophied state, and, vice versa in the alternative case.
This behaviour of the elementary sexual organisms, is indeed a model for the conduct of sexual individuals during intercourse. The male pursues the female for the purpose of sexual union, seizes hold of her and penetrates into her. Even in the sphere of human sexual life you

121 [This lecture is mainly based on two earlier papers: 'Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes' (1925) and 'Female Sexuality' (1931). The last section, however, dealing with women in adult life, contains new material. Freud returned to the subject once again in Chapter VII of the posthumous Outline of Psycho-Analysis (1940 [1938]).]

122 Heads in hieroglyphic bonnets,
Heads in turbans and black birettas,
Heads in wigs and thousand other
Wretched, sweating heads of humans....
(Heine, Nordsee -Second Cycle, VII, 'Fragen'.)

soon see how inadequate it is to make masculine behaviour coincide with activity and feminine with passivity. A mother is active in every sense towards her child; the act of lactation itself may equally be described as the mother suckling the baby or as her being sucked by it. The further you go from the narrow sexual sphere the more obvious will the 'error of superimposition'[123] become. Women can display great activity in various directions; men are not able to live in company with their own kind unless they develop a large amount of passive adaptability. If you now tell, that these facts go to prove precisely that both men and women are bisexual in the psychological sense, the Researcher will conclude that you have decided in your own minds to make 'active' coincide with 'masculine' and 'feminine'. But the Researcher advises you against it. It seems to her to serve no useful purpose and adds nothing to our knowledge.[124]

One might consider characterizing femininity psychologically as giving preference to passive aims. It is perhaps the case that in a woman, on the basis of her share in the sexual function, a preference for passive behaviour and passive aims is carried over into her life to a greater or lesser extent, in proportion to the limits, restricted or far-reaching, within which her sexual life thus serves as model. But we must beware in this of underestimating the influence of social customs, which similarly force women into passive situations. There is one particularly constant relation between femininity and instinctual life, which the Researcher does not want to overlook.

In conformity with its peculiar nature, psycho-analysis does not try to describe what a woman is - that would be a task it could scarcely perform-but sets about enquiring how she comes into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition. In recent times we have begun to learn a little about this, thanks to the circumstance that several of our excellent women colleagues in analysis have begun to work at the question. We, on the other hand, standing on the ground of bisexuality, had no difficulty in avoiding impoliteness. We had only to say: 'This doesn't apply to you. You're the exception; on this point you're more masculine than feminine.'

We approach the investigation of the sexual development of women with two expectations. The first is that, here once more the constitution will not adapt itself to its function without a struggle. The second is that the decisive turning points will already have been prepared for or completed before puberty. Both expectations are promptly confirmed. Furthermore, a comparison with what happens with boys tells us that the development of a little girl into a normal woman is more difficult and more complicated, since it includes two extra tasks, to which there is nothing corresponding in the development of a man. Undoubtedly the material is different to start with in boys and girls: it did not need psychoanalysis to establish that. Differences emerge too in the instinctual disposition, which gives a glimpse of the later nature of women. A little girl is as a rule, less aggressive, defiant and self-sufficient; she seems to have a greater need for being shown affection and on that account to be more dependent and pliant. The Researcher cannot say whether this lead in development has been confirmed by exact observations, but in any case there is no question that girls cannot be described as intellectually backward. These sexual differences are not, however, of great consequences: they can be outweighed by individual variations.

123 [I.e. mistaking two different things for a single one. The term was explained in Introductory Lectures, XX.]

124 [The difficulty of finding a psychological meaning for 'masculine' and 'feminine' was discussed in a long footnote added in 1915 to section 4 of the third of his Three Essays (1905), and again at the beginning of a still longer footnote at the end of Chapter IV of Civilization and its Discontents (1930).]

Both sexes seem to pass through the early phases of libidinal development in the same manner. Analysis of children's play has shown our women analysts that the aggressive impulses of little girls leave nothing to be desired in the way of abundance and violence. We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man. Little girls do the same thing with their still smaller clitoris. It seems that with them all their masturbatory acts are carried out on this penis-equivalent, and that the truly feminine vagina is still undiscovered by both sexes. With the change to femininity, the clitoris should wholly or in part, hand over its sensitivity, and at the same time its importance, to the vagina. We shall return to the part played by the clitoris; let us now turn to the second task with which a girl's development is burdened. A boy's mother is the first object of his love, and she remains so too during the formation of his Oedipus complex and, in essence, all through his life. The first object-cathexes occur in attachment to the satisfaction of the major and simple vital needs,[125] and the circumstances of the care of children are the same for both sexes. In the course of time, therefore, a girl has to change her erotogenic zone and her object - both of which a boy retains. The question then arises of how this happens: in particular, how does a girl pass from her mother to an attachment to her father? Or, in other words, how does she pass from her masculine phase to the feminine one to which she is biologically destined?

It would be a solution of ideal simplicity if we could suppose that from a particular age towards the elementary influence of the mutual attachment between the sexes makes itself felt, and impels the small woman towards men, while the same law allows the boy to continue with his mother. We might suppose in addition that in this the children are following the pointer given them by the sexual preference of their parents. For you must know that the number of women who remain till a late age tenderly dependent on a paternal object, or indeed on their real father, is very great. We have established some surprising facts about these women with an intense attachment of long duration to their father. We knew, of course, that there had been a preliminary stage of attachment to the mother, but we did not know that it could be so rich in content and so long lasting, and could leave behind so many opportunities for fixations and dispositions. In short, we get an impression that we cannot understand women unless we appreciate this phase of their pre-Oedipus attachment to their mother.

We shall be glad, then, to know the nature of the girl's libidinal relations to her mother. It is not always easy to point to a formulation of these early sexual wishes; what is most clearly expressed is a wish to get the mother with child and the corresponding wish to bear her a child - both belonging to the phallic period and sufficiently surprising, but established beyond doubt by analytic observation. The attractiveness of these investigations lies in the surprising detailed findings, which they bring us. In the period in which the main interest was directed to discovering infantile sexual traumas, almost all my women patients were of the opinion that their father had seduced them. The phantasy touches the ground of reality, for it was really the mother who by her activities over the child's bodily hygiene inevitably stimulated, and perhaps even roused for the first time, pleasurable sensations in her genitals[126]

125 [Cf. Introductory Lectures, XXI.]

126 [In his early discussion of the aetiology of hysteria Freud often mentioned seduction by adults as among its commonest causes (see, for instance, Section I of the second paper on the neuro-psychoses of defence (1896), and Section II of 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' (1896). But nowhere in these early publications did he specifically inculpate the girl's father. Indeed, in some additional footnotes written in 1924 for the Gesammelte schriften reprint of Studies on Hysteria, he admitted to having on two occasions suppressed the fact of the father's responsibility. He made this quite clear, however, in the letter to Fliess of September 21, 1897 (Freud, 1950, Letter 69), in which he first expressed his scepticism about these stories told by his patients. His first published admission of his mistake was*

The Researcher has no doubt you, as readers are ready to suspect that this portrayal of the abundance and strength of a little girl's sexual relations with her mother is very much overdrawn. Enough can be seen in the children if one knows how to look. And besides, you should consider how little of its sexual wishes a child could bring to preconscious expression or communicate at all.

We will now turn our interest on to the single question of what it is that brings this powerful attachment of the girl to her mother to an end. This as we know, is its usual fate; it is destined to make room for an attachment to her father. The turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. The Researcher now desires to take you through all the details of a psychoanalytic investigation.

The reproach against the mother, which goes back furthest, is that she gave the child too little milk - which is construed against her as lack of love. Mothers often have insufficient nourishment to give their children and are content to suckle them for a few months, for half or three-quarters of a year. Among primitive people, children are fed at their mother's breast for two or three years. The figure of the wet-nurse who suckles the child is as a rule merged into the mother; when this has not happened, the reproach is turned into another one - that the nurse, who fed the child so willingly, was sent away by the mother too early. It seems, rather, that the child's avidity for its earliest nourishment is altogether insatiable, that it never gets over the pain of losing its mother's breast. The Researcher will not be surprised if the analysis of a primitive child, who still suck at its mother's breast when it was already able to run about and talk, were to bring the same reproach to light. The fear of being poisoned is also probably connected with the withdrawal of the breast. Poison is nourishment that makes one ill.

The next accusation against the child's mother flares up when the next baby appears in the nursery. If possible, the connection with oral frustration is preserved: the mother could not or would not give the child any more milk because she needed the nourishment for the new arrival. A child's demands for love are immoderate; they make exclusive claims and tolerate no sharing.

An abundant source of a child's hostility to its mother is provided by its multifarious sexual wishes, which alter according to the phase of the libido and which cannot for the most part be satisfied. The stronger of these frustrations occur at the phallic period, if the mother forbids pleasurable activity with the genitals - often with severe threats and every sign of displeasure - activity to which, after all, she herself had introduced the child. One would think these were reasons enough to account for a girl's turning away from her mother. One would judge, if so, that the estrangement follows inevitably from the nature of children's sexuality, from the immoderate character of their demand for love and the impossibility of fulfilling their sexual wishes. A discussion of these possibilities might, the Researcher thinks, be most interesting; but an objection suddenly emerges which forces our interest in another direction.

The Researcher believes that we have found this specific factor, and indeed where we expected to find it, even though in a surprising form. As you hear, then, we ascribe a castration complex to women as well. The sight of the genitals of the other sex also starts the

*given several years later in a hint in the second of the Three Essays (1905, but a much fuller account of the position followed in his contribution on the aetiology of the neuroses to a volume by Lowenfeld (1906). Latter on he gave two accounts of the effects that this discovery of his mistake had on his own mind – in his 'History of the Psycho-analytic Movement' (1914), and in his Autobiographical Study (1925), (Norton, 1963). The further discovery which is described in th present paragraph of the text had already been indicated in the paper on 'Female Sexuality' (1931).]

castration complex of girls. The girl's recognition of the fact of her being without a penis does not by any means imply that she submits to the fact easily.

One cannot very well doubt the importance of envy for the penis. You may take it as an instance of male injustice, for the Researcher asserts that envy and jealousy play an even greater part in the mental life of women than of men. It is not that she thinks these characteristics are absent in men or that she thinks they have no other roots in women than envy for the penis; but the Researcher is inclined to attribute their greater amount in women to this latter influence. Some analysts, however, have shown an inclination to depreciate the importance of this first instalment of penis – envy in the phallic phase. This, however, is a general problem of depth psychology.

The infantile factor sets the pattern in all cases, but does not always determine the issue, though it often does. Precisely, in the case of penis envy. The Researcher hence argues decidedly in favour of the preponderance of the infantile factor.

The discovery that she is castrated, is a turning point in a girl's growth. Three possible lines of development start from it: one leads to sexual inhibition or to neurosis, the second to change of character in the sense of a masculinity complex, the third, finally, to normal femininity. We have learnt a fair amount, though not everything, about all three.

The essential content of the first is as follows: the little girl has hitherto lived in a masculine way, has been able to get pleasure by the excitation of her clitoris and has brought this activity into relation with her sexual wishes directed towards her mother, which are often active ones, now, owing to the influence of her penis-envy, she loses her enjoyment in her phallic sexuality. Her self-love is mortified by the comparison with the boy's far superior equipment and in consequence she renounces her masturbatory satisfaction from her clitoris, repudiates her love for her mother, and at the same time, infrequently represses a good part of her sexual trends in general. No doubt her turning away from her mother does not occur all at once, for to begin with the girl regards her castration as an individual misfortune, and only gradually extends it to other females and finally to her mother as well. Her love was directed to her phallic mother; with the discovery that her mother is castrated it becomes possible to drop her as an object, so that the motives for hostility, which have long been accumulating, gain the upper hand. This means, therefore, that as a result of the discovery of women's lack of penis they are debased in value for girls just as they are for boys and later perhaps for men.

Along with the abandonment of clitoridal masturbation a certain amount of activity is renounced. Passivity now has the upper hand, and the girl's turning to her father is accomplished principally with the help of passive instinctual impulses. If too much is not lost in the course of it through repression, this femininity may turn out to be normal. This wish with which the girl turns to her father is no doubt originally the wish for the penis which her mother has refused her and which she now expects from her father. The feminine situation is only established, however, if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby, if, that is, a baby takes the place of a penis in a accordance with an ancient symbolic equivalence. Not until the emergence of the wish for penis, does the doll-baby become a baby from the girl's father, and thereafter the aim of the most powerful feminine wish. Her happiness is great if later in this wish for a baby, finds fulfillment in reality, and quite especially so if the baby is a little boy who brings the longed-for penis with him.[127]

With the transference of the wish for a penis-baby on to her father, the girl has entered the situation of the Oedipus complex. For a long time the girl's Oedipus complex concealed her pre-Oedipus attachment to her mother from our view, though it is nevertheless so

127 [See p. 91.]

important and leaves such lasting fixations behind it. In a boy the Oedipus complex, in which he desires his mother and would like to get rid of his father as being a rival, develops naturally from the phase of his phallic sexuality. The castration complex prepares for the Oedipus complex instead of destroying it; the girl is driven out of her attachment to her mother through the influence of her envy for the penis and she enters the Oedipus situation as though into a haven of refuge. In the absence of fear of castration the chief motive is lacking which leads boys to surmount the Oedipus complex.

The Researcher has mentioned earlier about the second possible reaction to the discovery of female castration the development of a powerful masculinity complex. By this she means that the girl refuses, as it were, to recognize the unwelcome fact and, defiantly rebellious, even exaggerates her previous masculinity, clings to her clitoridal activity and takes refuge in an identification with her phallic mother or her father. Analytic experience teaches us, that female homosexuality, is seldom or never a direct continuation of infantile masculinity, in order to be sure. Even for a girl of this kind it seems necessary that she should take her father as an object for some time and enters the Oedipus situation. But afterwards, as a result of her inevitable disappointments from her father, she is driven to regress into her early masculinity complex.

What the Researcher has been telling here, may be described as the prehistory of women. Dr. Ruth Mack Brunswick [1928] was the first to describe a case of neurosis, which went back to a fixation in the pre-Oedipus stage and had never reached the Oedipus situation at all. The case took the form of jealous paranoia and proved accessible to therapy. Dr. Jeanne Lamp-de-Groot [1927] has established the incredible phallic activity of girls towards their mother by some assured observations, and Dr. Helene Deutsch [1932] has shown that erotic actions of homosexual women reproduce the relations between mother and baby.

It is not the Researcher's intention to pursue the further behaviour of femininity through puberty to the period of maturity. Regressions to the fixations of the pre-Oedipus phases, very frequently occur; in the course of women's lives there is a repeated alternation between periods in which masculinity or femininity, gains the upper hand. Some portion of what men call 'the enigma of women' may perhaps be derived from this expression of bisexuality in women's lives. We have called the motive force of sexual life 'the libido'. Sexual life is dominated by the polarity of masculine-feminine; thus the notion suggests itself of considering the relation of the libido to this antithesis. It would not be surprising if it were to turn out that each sexuality had its own special libido appropriated to it, so that one sort of libido would pursue the aims of a masculine sexual life and another sort those of a feminine one. There is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and the feminine sexual functions. Nevertheless the juxtaposition 'feminine libido' is without any justification.

The sexual frigidity of women, the frequency of which appears to confirm this disregard, is a phenomenon that is still insufficiently understood. The Researcher will now relate to a few more psychical peculiarities of mature femininity, as we come across them in analytic observation. If you reject this idea as fantastic, and regard the Researcher's belief in the influence of lack of a penis on 'the configuration of femininity as an ideal fixed, she is of course defenceless. The determinants of women's choice of an object are often made unrecognizable by social conditions. If the girl has remained in her attachment to her father– that is, in the Oedipus complex - her choice is made according to the paternal type. Since, when she turned from her mother to her father, the hostility of her ambivalent relation remained with her mother, a choice of this kind should guarantee a happy marriage. The woman's husband, who to begin with inherited from her father, becomes after a time her mother's heir as well. Under the influence of a woman's becoming a mother herself, an identification with her own mother may be revived, against which she had striven up till the

time of her marriage, and this may attract all the available libido to itself, so that the compulsion to repeat reproduces an unhappy marriage between her parents. The difference in a mother's reaction to the birth of a son or a daughter shows that the old factor of lack of a penis has even now not lost its strength.

A woman's identification with her mother allows us to distinguish two strata: the pre-Oedipus one, which rests on her affectionate attachment to her mother and takes her as a model, and the later one from the Oedipus complex which seeks to get rid of her mother and take her place with her father. It is in this identification too that she acquires her attractiveness to a man, whose Oedipus attachment to his mother gets kindled into passion. One gets an impression that a man's love and a woman's are a phase apart psychologically.

We also regard women as weaker in their social interests and as having less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men. The former is no doubt derived from the dissocial quality, which unquestionably characterizes all sexual relations. On the other hand the Researcher cannot help mentioning an impression that she has constantly observed. This is what the Researcher had to say to you about the conceptualization of femininity.

Some New Observations on the Origins of Femininity [Ethel Person]

Psychoanalysis was the first comprehensive personality theory, which attempted, does explain the psychological origins of the "polarities" of masculinity and femininity. That such polarities exist is not a matter for debate; the observation of distinctions between masculinity and femininity is universal.

Marie Bonaparte was one of the analysis who contributed to the development of the early psychoanalytic formulations on woman; formulations not only about sexual development but also about the character traits associated with femaleness. Her article "passivity, Masochism, and Femininity," published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis in 1935, is reprinted as a section in her 1953 book, Female Sexuality.

Bonaparte, like Freud, believed that prephallic development is essentially congruent for both sexes.

The adult woman's sexuality may be problematic for four reasons relating to development as described in this scheme: (1) penis envy, (2) the necessity of transferring genital interest from the clitoris to the vagina, (3) the necessity for switching the love object in the Oedipal phase, and (4) the vital need to defend against the masochism implicit for the woman in "sadistic coitus."

Bonaparte agreed with Freud that the discovery of the anatomic distinction is decisive not only for female sexual development, but also for the development of those personality traits associated with femaleness; passivity, masochism, and narcissism. Bonaparte believed that there might be some pre-Oedipal precursors of masculinity or femininity (for example, a constitutional predisposition to passivity), but that, by and large, the personality traits referable to femininity are born in the phallic Oedipal phase of development.

In the view, femininity primarily derives from the psychological ramifications of a single momentous and traumatic perception, the girl's discovery of her anatomic difference from boys, a difference viewed as an inadequacy. It is the child's symbolic elaboration of the perception of the distinction, not the anatomic difference per se, which ushers in the divergence in personality development.

Bonaparte was an astute observer and most of the sequences she described in psychosexual development are still observable in women's analyses. Feelings of mutilation, penis envy, and the ramifications of the Oedipus complex are almost invariably prominent. **The Researcher discusses this re-evaluation of the data in terms of two questions. First,**

is it possible to conceptualize certain character traits, such as masochism, in a different framework, and second, what are the current theories about the origins of femininity?

A Re-evaluation of Feminine Maso-chism

Masochism "may perhaps best be defined as the seeking of unpleasure, by which is meant physical or mental pain, discomfort or wretchedness, for the sake of sexual pleasure, with the qualification that either the seeking or the pleasure, or both may often be unconscious rather than conscious" (Brenner, 1959). Despite the fact that the actual masochistic sexual perversion is reported predominantly in men (Reik, 1941), most analysts assume that masochism is more prominent in the mental life of women than of men. The data base to which the label "feminine masochism" applies has never been fully elucidated, but loosely applies to the frequency of slave, prostitute, beating, and humiliation fantasies elicited during the analyses of women. Although no one has done a statistical analysis of women's fantasy life as it emerges in analysis, it might also be noted that women are given to many other sorts of fantasies as well, for example femme fatale, achievement, stardom, love, mothering, and, marital fantasies. Masochism in women may also present itself as moral masochism, as certain "stickiness" in relationships or in a tendency to suffer in love relationships.

Bonaparte, who, along with Deutsch, was a chief architect of the theory of feminine masochism, saw it as an inevitable concomitant of female sexual development. She described beating fantasies as a normal sequence in the psychosexual development of girls. The child first entertains fantasies of being beaten in the anal-sadistic stage. These beating fantasies are originally aggressive, not sexual, and are sexualized only in the phallic phase when a child develops the sadistic theory of intercourse. With the discovery of the sexual difference, the girl sexualizes the fantasy of being beaten.

Although Bonaparte is more careful than her colleagues to distinguish masochism and passivity as development issues, which may not, in fact, appear in the analyses of some adult women as personality trends, her conclusions parallel those of the other analysts:

> **Masochism in woman is far stronger than in man. The aggression against the mother, in the girl's passive Oedipus complex, can never result in a superego equal to that produced by the boy's active Oedipus complex ... she remains, throughout life, more subject to her infantile libidinal urges than is man.**

Even if one concurs that masochism is, in fact, more prominent in the mental life of women than in the mental life of men, one can still ask whether it is inevitable because of female sexual development, or whether it derives from other sources, and serves certain adaptive ends. (The Researcher emphasizes that it is not self-evident to her that women are more masochistic, that is, self-defeating or self-punishing, than men, but rather it may be that women and men are equally masochistic but in different areas of life.)

"So long as the need exists to perceive human with superhuman power so long will there co-exist the need for self-depreciatory and self-destructive masochistic attitudes and behaviour." (Bieber, 1953). Insofar as the gender role model for women as dependent, passive, and childlike, masochism will be promoted as a character trait. Or, to quote from another analyst, "... masochism seems to be the weapon of the weak - i.e., of every child faced with the danger of human aggression" "(Loewenstein, 1957). Lowenstein (1957) postulates "seduction of the aggressor," a forerunner of masochism, as a mechanism of childhood, which allows the child actively to preserve parental love.

There is an additional factor, which promotes masochism in women. Insofar as sexuality is more forbidden to women than to men, an increased sexual guilt will strengthen masochistic tendencies.

There is, of course, one enormous irony in the history of analytic concepts of feminine masochism. Freud (1924) described masochism as presenting itself in there shapes: (1)

erotogenic, (2) feminine, and (3) moral; he was the first to describe feminine masochism but he described it as it occurred in men. In essence, men perceive the female lot as one of suffering and thus equate it wish a masochistic position in life. It is less clear that women perceive it in this light.

From the Researcher's current vantage point, it seems possible to say that insofar as masochism is predominant in women, it derives from the social role of women vis a vis men, not from intrinsic libidinal endowment or from the perception of the anatomic distinction or from the conception of coitus as aggressive. If coitus is perceived by children as aggressive, with the male as aggressor, that very perception may reflect the child's awareness of social roles in which the male is perceived as strong and aggressive even before the child knows what the anatomic sex difference is.

The Researcher has attempted to re-evaluate feminine masochism in terms of its psychological origins. In larger sense, it is possible to re-evaluate the whole development of femininity and to state categorically that femininity is not simply a derivative of the girl's perception of the anatomic distinction.

Towards a Theory of Gender Differentia-tion

Even in the twenties and thirties, not all analysts agreed with Freud's formulations on women and a lively debate on femininity appeared in the psychoanalytic literature. In the view of Freud and his supporters, including Bonaparte, penis envy was the pivotal feature in the mental life of women. The little girl retreated into femininity because her masculinity was blocked by virtue of inadequate equipment. In the opposition view (Karen Horney, 1933 Ernest Jones, 1935), femininity was seen as primary and was thought to antedate the phallic-oedipal phase. From the beginning, in this view, the little girl is concerned with her vagina and the inside of her body; penis envy is a secondary and defensive structure and results from a dread of femininity-for example, fear of penetration. Freud's original analytic question was, "What is the effect on the girl's mental life of the discovery that the clitoris is an inferior penis?" The opposition analysts replaced this question with two others: "Is the small girl aware of her vagina?" And if so, "What are the consequences for mental life of the awareness of the vagina?" Bonaparte referred to the opposition as "those feminine apologists of the vagina."

Most observers have confined Horney's contention that male and female behavior is discrepant at a very early age, prior to the child's awareness of the anatomic sexual difference, but have felt her explanation of the discrepancy to be narrowly derived. Blind children, boys with congenital absence of the penis, and girls with congenital absence of the vagina have all been observed to differentiate along gender lines appropriate to their sex.

In recent years, the introduction of the concept of gender role identity, which is the generic name for psychological maleness and femaleness (masculinity and femininity), has allowed some more objective description of the psychological differences between the sexes than Freud's original description. The origin of gender role identity is once more the focus of attention in psychology and psychoanalysis.

Pioneer studies by Money (Money et al, 1955, 1957) and Stoller (1968) indicate that the first and crucial step in psychosexual development and gender differentiation is the self-designation by the child as male or as female. Such a self-designation arises in the early years of life in agreement with the parental designation of the child sex, that is, according to whether the child is "diagnosed" as male or female (sex of assignment). This self-designation, defined by the term core gender, may have unconscious as well as conscious components. It the misdiagnosis of sex is discovered after the age of the incorrect genetic sex since profound psychological upheavals accompany reversal after that age.

A cognitive theory offered by development psychologists (Kohlberg, 1966) suggests that gender is an aspect of self-identification, as well as a means for categorizing others, which aids the child in orienting to his/her world. As such, gender plays an organizing role in psychic structure, similar to other modalities of cognition, space, time causation, and self-object discrimination.

Core gender identity, once established, locates the appropriate object for imitation and identification. Girls and boys develop self-esteem by engaging in behavior "appropriate" to their sex. Thus the child begins to develop along either feminine or masculine lines.

Insofar as girls identify with mature women, they may incorporate attributes referable to the sexual and reproductive cycle of women prior to having experienced these events in their own lives. In this way the mature sexuality of a mother influences the mind of her child: Bonaparte alludes to this fact in stressing the impact of the sight of menstrual blood or childbirth on girl's conceptions of sex.

The original analytic emphasis on genital sensations, genital self-stimulation, castration anxiety, penis envy and the Oedipus complex as formative elements in the life of women has not been abolished, but is now viewed as superimposed upon earlier influences in gender differentiation. Many authors (e.g., Ovesey, 1956) have noted that penis envy may not be a literal desire for the phallic, but a symbolic statement about desired male prerogatives, that is, that the girl envies the masculine gender role or is fearful of the feminine one. Given the variegated factors in gender consolidation, it is not surprising to discover that many women present gender problems. One is struck with this finding in view of the insistent belief in the early psychoanalytic literature that female development is more problematic than male development. With the more recent emphasis on the early years of life, female development is regarded as less problematic and male development as less straightforward than was originally thought. Since the first object of identification for both sexes is the mother, the boy must switch his object of identification from mother to father. This development step, which the girl is spared, is vulnerable to interference from early separation anxiety or other infantile trauma.

The girl must switch her love object, but the boy must switch his object of identification. Both of these development issues have received attentions in the psychoanalytic literature, but the Researcher believes the difference in the two childhood situations has ramifications in many other ways as well. Men fear entrapment in marriage more than women, is this because the wife is of the same sex as the primary caretaker of childhood? What are the differences in empathy, intuitive understanding, rivalries, sexuality, and mutuality that the mother feels for her own sex compared with the other sex and what consequences do these differences have in the mental life of the child?

The Researcher has tried to indicate that the origins of gender differentiation are more variegated and more complicated than those proposed in the original psychoanalytic formulations of Freud, Bonaparte, and others. (She has omitted any reference to a biological component in neonatal sex differences-the male-brain, female-brain theory. Femininity does not derive exclusively from the child's discovery of the anatomic distinction, but has a long prephallic history.

Femininity and Masculinity
(The Sexual Character)

The most common conception of the psychology of gender is that women and men as groups, have different traits: different temperaments, characters, outlooks and opinions, abilities, even whole structures of personality. There is no accepted term for this concept; and the Researcher chooses to call it 'sexual character'; 'sexual' is more apt than the 'gender' since in most usages the idea is specifically linked with sex.

Likewise, there is one set of traits for women, which defines femininity. This unitary model of sexual character is a familiar part of sexual ideology. Jokes against 'women drivers', or the 'Mere Male' column in the women's magazine New Idea, work by calling into play shared assumptions of this kind: that women are hopeless with cars, that men are hopeless around the house.

In Talcott Parson's classic work 'instrumental' versus 'expressive' traits are supposed to mark the two sexual characters that correspond to the male and female roles. A unitary model of sexual character underlies Nancy Chodorow's feminist reworking of the same themes. Here the focus is on how women's sexual character prepares them for mothering and men's does not. Notions of unitary sexual character have also emerged in cultural feminism in the last ten years.

Freud's writing implied rather different conceptions of femininity and masculinity, but most of Freud's followers returned to convention. Prominent in the psychoanalytic shift towards conservatism was the Austrian/American Theodor Reik. His long essay 'The Emotional Differences of the Sexes' is a classic statement of the unitary model.

In more recent psychoanalytic literature such conceptions of gender remain active. The American Robert May, for instance, makes the difference between 'the male and the female fantasy patterns' the central theme of his book Sex and Fantasy.

The facts at issue in this research are what might be called the block differences between women and men - for instance, differences between the average reaction times or tactile sensitivity of women and men; or between average scores on tests of verbal ability, anxiety, or extraversion. Comparable samples of women and men are needed, together with a reliable measure of some sort.

When block differences do appear they are conventionally explained by appeal to some underling traits which distinguish women or men - in other words by a unitary conception of sexual character. Often sex role notions are brought in to provide a common-sense explanation of how sexual character is formed. Often sex differences are hardly distinguished from sex roles at all; the two blur together in a single concept.

Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin made a vast compendium of this kind of research in the mid-1970s. The Psychology of Sex Differences reported that block differences between women and men (generally white, affluent, North American college students) did appear fairly consistently in studies of some traits: verbal ability, visual/spatial ability, mathematical ability, aggressiveness. Recent research has not shown that Maccoby and Jacklin systematically underestimated sex differences.

Small differences-on-average, in the context of a very large overlapping of the distributions of men and women, are usual even with traits where differences appear fairly consistently.

In so far as these scales and measures can be trusted, the notion of distinct unitary sexual characters for women and men has been decisively refuted. With it, much of the common-sense understanding of sex and gender, together with most functionalist sex role theorizing, should collapse.

Differences between means, suffice to establish difference between a male and female norm. Role theory provides a gloss. As argued, role theory is infinitely plastic. Concern with variation in the traits for which feminine and masculine sexual character are explanations is only a step from concern with variation in femininity or masculinity themselves. This path leads to non-unitary conceptions of sexual character. Both femininity and masculinity vary, and understanding their variety is central to the psychology of gender.

Masculinity/Femininity Scales

Some tests have used projective methods, such as the 'IT' scale, which shows children a sexually ambiguous figure and invites them to make up a story about it. This most famous of all psychiatric screening tests contained a masculinity-femininity subscale, and set the pattern of a self-report inventory with many short items. This count, sometimes transformed statistically, becomes the respondent's femininity or masculinity score.

The form of the self-description varies a little. Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich in Masculinity and Femininity, use a questionnaire, which invites people to rate themselves on where they fall between two specified extremes, for example:

Very rough ...... Very gentle

goes to pieces under pressure... stands up well under pressure

Sandra Bem, author of the famous 'androgyny' scale, dispenses with the polar opposites. Each item simply names a trait and asks respondents to rate how often it is true of them:

Ambitious...
Forceful...
Affectionate...
Child-like...

How is it known that these scales measure femininity and masculinity? The usual test has been that each item discriminates statistically between women and men. In principle any item that shows a sex difference can figure in M/F scales. Items range from generalized self-descriptions like those quoted above, to job preferences, word associations, neurotic symptoms, and information and aesthetic interests.

The researcher knows about this entity but the 'subject' does not.

Nearly thirty years ago, in **The Person in Psychology**, Paul Lafitte mounted a sustained critique of what he called 'substantive abstraction' in psychological measurement. Gender scaling, like other forms of personality and attitude scaling, involves a radical desemanticization of human practice. It is a case of what R. D. Laing in another context called 'transpersonal invalidation'.

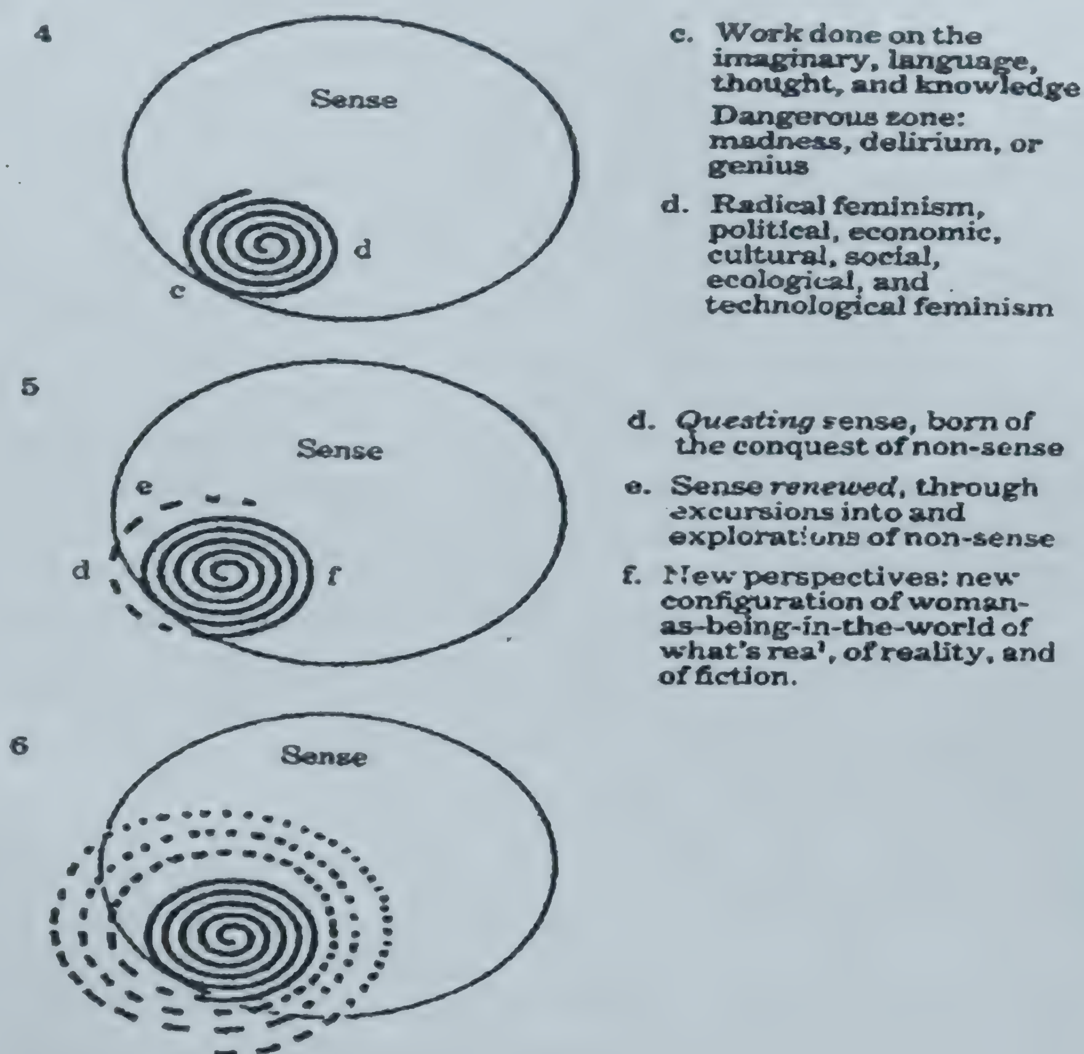
If a person's answers to related items conflict, this does not register as a problem, for instance a question of ambivalence. It simply lowers the total score. Femininity and masculinity are thus implicitly theorized as homogeneous dimensions of temperament, which can be measured in all people. In a roundabout way this allows scalar research to recognize a point that unitary conceptions of sexual character could not, the coexistence of masculinity and femininity in the same person. Femininity and masculinity need not be treated as polar opposites, i.e., as ends of the same dimension. Each might be treated as a separate scale, and the same person might get high scores on both.

This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define hegemonic form of masculinity in the society as a whole. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works.

There is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men. More recently the French analyst Luce Irigaray, in a celebrated essay 'This Sex Which Is Not One', has emphasized the absence of any clear-cut definition for women's eroticism and imagination in a patriarchal society.

At the level of mass social relations, however, forms of femininity are defined clearly enough. It is the global subordination of women to men that provides an essential basis for differentiation. One form is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented

to accommodating the interests and desires of men. The researcher desires to call this 'emphasized femininity'. Others are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance.



The rest of this section will examine more closely the cases of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, making brief comments on subordinated and marginalized forms.

In the concept of hegemonic masculinity, 'hegemony' means (as in Gramsci's analyses of class relations in Italy from which the term is borrowed) a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. Ascendancy, which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth, is.

If we do not recognize this it would be impossible to account for the everyday contestation that actually occurs in social life, let alone for historical changes in definitions of gender patterns on the grand scale.

Hegemonic masculinity, then, is very different from the notion of a general 'male sex role', though the concept allows us to formulate more precisely some of the sound points made in the sex-role literature. Hegemonic masculinity is very public. The focus on media images and media discussions of masculinity in the 'Books About Men' of the 1970s and 1980s, from Warren Farrell's **The Liberated Man** to Barbara Ehrenreich's **The Hearts of Men**.

The public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support.

It does not imply that hegemonic masculinity means being particularly nasty to women. Women may feel as oppressed by non-hegemonic masculinities, may even find the hegemonic pattern more familiar and manageable. There is likely to be a kind of 'fit' between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. What it does imply, is the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women. In this sense hegemonic masculinity must embody a successful collective strategy in relation to women.

Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities. Some of the interactions could be described as police and legal harassment, street violence, economic discrimination. The AIDS scare has been marked less by sympathy for gays as its main victims than by hostility to them as the bearers of a new threat.

In other cases of subordinated masculinity, the condition is temporary. Cynthia Cockburn's splendid study of printing workers in London portrays a version of hegemonic masculinity that involved ascendancy over young men as well as over women.

Several general points about masculinity also apply to the analysis of femininity at the mass level. These patterns too are historical: relationships change, new forms of femininity emerge and others disappear. What most women support is not necessarily what they are.

All forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. For this reason there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men.

First, the concentration of social power in the hands of men leaves limited scope for women to construct institutionalized power relationships notably in mother- daughter relationships. Institutionalized power hierarchies have also existed in contexts like the girl's schools pictured in Madchen in Uniform and Frost in May. The much lower level of violence between women than violence between men is fair indication of this. Second, the organization of a hegemonic form around dominance over the other sex is absent from the social construction of femininity. Power, authority, aggression, technology are not thematized in femininity at large as they are in masculinity.

The dominant structure, which the construction of femininity cannot avoid, is the global dominance of heterosexual men. The potion of compliance is central to the pattern of femininity, which is given most cultural and ideological support at present, called here 'emphasized femininity'. At the mass level these are organized around themes of sexual receptivity in relation to younger women and motherhood in relation to older women.

Like hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, as a cultural construction is very public, though its content is specifically linked with the private realm of the home and the bedroom. The articles and advertisements in mass-circulation women's magazines, the 'women pages' of mass-circulation newspapers and the soap operas and 'games' of daytime television, are familiar cases. This kind of femininity is performed, and performed especially to men. It is a major concern of women's magazines from Women's Weekly to Vogue.
Femininity organized as an adaptation to men's power, and emphasizing compliance, nurturance and empathy as womanly virtues, is not in much of a state to establish hegemony over other kinds of femininity. There is a familiar paradox about antifeminist women's groups like 'Women Who Want to be Women' who exalt the Kinder, Kirche und Kuche version of femininity: they can only become politically active by subverting their own prescriptions.

Central to the maintenance of emphasized femininity, is practice that prevents other models of femininity gaining cultural articulation. When feminist historiography describes women's experience as 'hidden from history', in Sheila Rowbotham's phrase, it is responding partly to this fact. Conventional historiography recognizes, indeed presupposes, conventional femininity. What is hidden from it is the experience of spinsters' lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches.

End Notes:-

Unitary Modals and Sex-difference Research

(pp.167-71). Research since Maccoby and Jacklin is large and life is short; one example must do. The text cited two studies of cognition, an area where Maccoby and Jacklin thought sex differences were well established. Fairweather (1976) argued that these differences were trivial. Hyde (1981) concluded they were consistent but small. Rosenthal and Rubin (1982) concluded they were not so well, but probably declining. An outside observer may reasonably suspend judgment between these views, but all must agree that if there are systemic sex differences here, they are not very large in terms of overall variance on the measures.

Masculinity/Femininity Scales

(pp.171-5). For classic critiques of reified measurement in attitude and personality research see Goldhamer (1949), Williams (1959) and Cicourel (1964). Lafitte's critique (1957) remains the most penetrating on technical grounds.

Multiple Models

(pp. 175-9). Bim Andrew's quotation from Burnett (1982), pp.130-1. Angus Barr quoted from original interview transcript. For the story of 'Auburn College' see Connell et al. (1981). The argument at the end of this section leaves open the sense in which we can speak of 'femininity' in a man and 'masculinity' in a woman. The psychoanalytic evidence implies that these are meaningful expressions, but since they involve a psychological structure that works against bodily experience it can hardly be the same kind of structure as women's femininity or men's masculinity. The pressures set up can be ferocious enough to change the body image itself, as with those transsexuals who experience their penises or their breasts as not being part of their bodies.

The Effect of Structures

(pp. 180-2). Fred Broughton quotation from Burnett (1982), p. 299.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity

(p.183-8). Quotation from Klein (1946) p.164. On Burgess's remarkable immunity see Seale and McConville (1978). The concepts discussed in this section are both important and underdeveloped; the Researcher's argument is more tentative than usual here. The mother-daughter relationship might modify the argument about femininity significantly.

The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault Reconstructing Feminist discourse on the Body

The body, as anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued, is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the conceit language of the body. The body may also operate as a metaphor for culture.

The body is not only a text of culture. Our conscious politics, social commitments, starving for change may be undermined and betrayed by the life of our bodies – not the craving, instinctual body imagined by Plato, Augustine, and Freud but the docile, regulated body practiced at and habituated to the rules of cultural life.

Throughout his later "genealogical" works (Discipline and Punish, History of Sexuality), Foucault constantly reminds us of the primacy of practice over belief. Not chiefly through "ideology," but through the organization and regulation of the time, space, and movements of our daily lives, our bodies are trained, shaped, and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity. For women, as study after study shows, are spending more time on the management and discipline of our bodies than we have in a long, long time.[128]

The last, of course, also describes our contemporary aesthetic ideals for women, an ideal whose obsessive pursuit has become the central torment of many women's lives.[129] In such an era we desperately need an effective political discourse about the female body, a discourse adequate to an analysis of the insidious, and often paradoxical, pathways of modern social control. Development such a discourse requires reconstructing the "old" feminist body-discourse of the late 1960s and early 1970s, with its political categories of oppressors and oppressed, villains and victims. We need an analytics' adequate to describe a power whose central mechanisms are not repressive, but constitutive: "a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impending them, making them submit, or destroying them" (Foucault 1978: 136).

The Researcher recognizes too, that these disorders have been largely class and race, specific, occurring over-whelmingly among white middle- and upper middle-class women. Nonetheless, anorexia, hysteria, and agoraphobia may provide a paradigm of one way in which potential resistance is not merely undercut but utilized in the maintenance and reproduction of existing power relations.

The Body as a Text of Femininity

The continuum between female disorder and "normal" female practice is sharply revealed through a close reading of those disorders to which women have been particularly vulnerable. But the talking up of eating disorders on a mass scale is as unique to the culture of the 1980s as the epidemic of hysteria was to the Victorian era.

The symptomatology of these disorders reveals itself as textuality. The bodies of disordered women this way offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the interpreter-a text that insists, actually demands, it be read as a cultural statement, a statement about gender. Both nineteenth-century male physicians and twentieth-century feminist critics have seen, in the symptoms of interrogations of culture, language is a central concern. From the beginning of philosophy, men have set themselves up as the central reference point of an epistemology built on a set of hierarchical oppositions in which 'man' (white, Graeco-Roman, ruling class) always occupies the privileged position: self/other, subject/object, presence/absence, law/chaos, man/woman. French theorizing of the feminine emphasizes the extent to which the masculine subject has relegated women to the negative pole of his hierarchies, associating her with all the categories of 'not-man' that shore up his claim to centrality and his right to

128 On "docility," see Foucault 1979, 135-169. For a Foucauldian analysis of `feminine practice, see Bartky 1988; see also Brownmiller 1984.

129 On our cultural obsession with slenderness, see Chernin 1981; Ohrbach 1985; Bordo 1985, 1989. For recent research on incidence and increase in anorexia nervosa and bulimia, see Greenfield et al. 1987; Rosenzweig and Spruill 1987.

power. The portmanteau term for this male-dominated ('humanist') metaphysics is "phallocentrism' – the primacy of the phallus, of men's word as law, of men as the origin of meaning.

Helene Cixous, one of the most prolific writers involved in French thinking about the feminine, maps out the binary oppositions that structure the phallocentric system as follows:

Where is she?
Activity/Passivity,
Sun/Moon,
Culture/Nature,
Day/Night,
Father/Mother,
Head/Heart,
Intelligible/sensitive,
Logos/Pathos.

Form, convex, step, advance, seed, progress.
Matter, concave, ground – which supports the step, receptacle.

Man
———
Woman

She suggests the psychic force of this longstanding structure of thought when she writes:

Men and women are caught up in a network of millennial cultural determinations of a complexity that is practically unanalyzable: we can no more talk about 'woman' than about 'man' without getting caught up in an ideological theater where the multiplication of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications constantly transforms, deforms, alters each person's imaginary order and in advance renders all conceptualization null and void.

(p.96)

Lacanian psychoanalysis, extending Freud's exposure of the unconscious conflicts at work in any supposedly sovereign subject, intersects with certain deconstructive insights in its theory of gendered speaking subject. For Lacan too the unified human subject is always a myth.

Lacan defines language, the symbolic order, as the world of public discourses, which the child enters only as a result of culturally enforced separation from her/his mother and his - but not her - identification with the Father, the male in-family representative of culture. Thus Lacanian theory reserves the 'I' position for men. Women, because they lack the phallus, the positive symbol of gender, self-possession and worldly authority around which language is organized, occupy a negative position in language. Moreover, because masculine desire dominates speech and posits woman as an idealized fantasy-fulfillment for the incurable emotional lack caused by the separation from the mother, Lacan can say 'Woman does not exist' (Mitchell and Rose 1982, pp. 48-50). Following Freud's definition of all sexual desire as masculine (that is, active), Lacan also argues that woman can enter into the symbolic life of the unconscious only to the extent that she internalizes male desire (phallic libido) – that is, to the extent that she imagines herself as men imagine her (Lacan 1975, p. 90). In a psycholinguistic world structured by father-son resemblance and rivalry and by the primacy of masculine logic, woman is a gap or a silence, the invisible and unheard sex.

Difference between feminite and ecriture feminine

Luce Irigaray, originally a member of Lacan's Ecole Freudienne and since 1977 one of its most vocal critics, argues against his conclusions about women. If women-as-subjects are out – siders to language, if they have lacked a position from which to counter or derail male-central conceptions of both sexes, she shows, this is the consequence not of inevitable family

arrangements but of millennia of cultural subordination of women's bodies and their sexuality to the needs and fantasies of men. Irigaray's book Speclum de l'autre femme (1974) is an analysis of the suppression of the feminine from Platonic idealism through Hegel to Freud and Levi-Strauss: woman has been defined as irrational, the other (a negativity to be transcended), an imperfect man (a man without penis), an object of exchange among men. Phallocentric concepts and their historical consequences can be transformed, Irigaray argues, only when women find ways to assert their specificity as women, their difference from men and men's systems of representation. In contrast to male sexuality, focused on the penis, Irigaray locates women's sexuality in the totality of the female body – including, for example the two lips of the vulva – which she defines as a diffuse erotic field affecting women's jouissance (sexual pleasure)[130] as it subtends feminine psychic processes and responses to the discourses of the outer (masculine) world:

> Woman's desire most likely does not speak the same language as men's desire, and it probably has been covered over by the logic that has dominated the West since the Greeks.... Woman ha sex organs just about everywhere....
>
> (Irigaray 1977a, pp. 101-3)

Irigaray moves from women's bodies to their being-in - the - world, emphasizing tactile/corporeal sensitivities, multiple focused perception and woman-to-woman relatedness; and these 'feminine' characteristics are proposed, in varying forms, throughout French theorizing of the feminine. The basis for such discussions, however, remains women's exclusion from the symbolic - that is, their absence as subjects from the powerful discourse of philosophy and psychoanalysis.

If women have been entrapped in the symbolic order, they will mark their escape from it by producing texts that challenge and move beyond the Law - of - the Father. Cixous suggested the urgency of this undertaking in a 1976 article:

Everything turns on the Word: everything is the Word and only the Word ... we must take culture at its word, as it takes us into its word, into its tongue.... No political reflection can dispense with reflection on language, with work on language. For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks (to) us, dictates its law...; even at the moment of uttering a sentence... we are already seized by a certain kind of masculine desire.

(Cixous 1976b, pp. 44-5)

With a lyricism typical of her own ecriture feminine (feminine practice/process of writing), she writes in her manifesto 'The Laugh of the Medusa':

130 Jouissance is a word rich in connotations and, by now, the catalyst of a critical mini-ndustry. 'Pleasure' is the simplest translation. The noun comes from the verb Jouir, to enjoy, to revel in without fear of the cost; also, to have an orgasm. Stephen Heath's Translator's Note to a collection of essays by Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, includes the following:

> **English lacks a word able to carry the range of meaning in the term jouissance which includes enjoyment in the sense of a legal or social possession (enjoy certain rights, enjoy a privilege), pleasure, and crucially, the pleasure of sexual climax. The problem would be less acute were it not that jouissance is specifically contrasted to plaisir by Barthes in his Le Plaisir de texte: on the one hand a pleasure (plaisir) linked to cultural enjoyment and identity, to the cultural enjoyment of identity, to a homogenizing movement of the ego; on the other a radically violent pleasure (jouissance) which shatters- dissipates, loses –that cultural identity, that ego.**
>
> (Heath 1977, p.9)

A note in New French Feminisms, an anthology of French writings that will be very useful to English-language readers, defines the feminite- linked appropriation of the term as follows:

This pleasure, when attributed to woman, is considered to be a different order from the pleasure that is represented within the male libidinal economy often described in terms of the capitalist "

I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies.... Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history –by her own movement...

(Cixous 1975a, pp. 245, 259-60)

Julia Kristeva, one of the pro-modernist Tel Quel circle in the 1970s, takes a position less woman-centred than that of Cixous. Kristeva derives the semiotic from infants' pre-oedipal fusion with their mothers, from the polymorphous bodily pleasure and rhythmic play of mother-infant communication, censored or harshly redirected by paternal (social) discourse. Although the semiotic is equally accessible to men and women, Kristeva argues that women's psychosocial position enforces their out-siders status:

If logical unity is paranoid and homosexual [directed by men to men], the feminine demand ... will never find a proper symbolic, will at best be enacted as a moment inherent in rejection, in the process of ruptures, of rhythmic breaks.

(Kristeva 1977a, p.12)

Kristeva sees maternity as a conceptual challenge to phallogocentrism (Kristeva 1977b): gestation and nurturance break down the oppositions between self and other, subject and object, inside and outside. (Kristeva 1974b, p. 166).

In the contrast to Kristeva, Irigaray focuses on a sexually specific relationship between women and language. To speak as a woman (parler femme, in her shorthand) is to reproduce the doubleness, contiguity and fluidity of women's sexual morphology and the multi-centred libidinal energy that arises from them. Irigaray also argues that women's psychic position emerges from the complexities of the mother-daughter bond. She writes a monologue in the voice of a daughter attempting to rework her link with her mother in Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre ('And One Doesn't Stir without the Other'), a text to which her model of how a woman's speech should be 'heard' (interpreted) could serve as literary-critical guide:

One must listen to her differently in order to hear an 'other meaning' which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized.... Her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is contiguity. They touch (upon).

(Irigaray 1977a, p.103)

Rejecting Freudian and Lacanian theories of woman as lack, she calls for an assertion of the female body as plenitude, as a positive force, the source simultaneously of multiple physical capacities (gestation, birth, lactation) and of libratory texts. She concentrates on erotics of writing, to be derived from a feminine unconscious shaped by female bodily drives:

•gain and profit motive. Women's jouissance carries with it the notion of fluidity, diffusion, duration. It is a kind of potlatch in the world of orgasms, a giving, expending, dispensing of pleasure without concern about ends or closure.

(Marks and de Courtivron 1980, p.36)

See also, for remarks on the ineffability of the term, Gallop (1984).

Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth....
To write, an act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal.

(Cixous 1975a, p.250)

Metaphors of abundant maternity – composition as childbirth, ink as milk- accompany her portraits of woman as writer:

She is giving birth, with the strength of lioness, of aplant, of a cosmogony, of a woman.... A desire for text! Confusion! What possesses her? A child! Paper! Intoxications! I'm overflowing! My breasts overflow! Milk. Ink. The moment of suckling, and I? I too am hungry. The taste of milk, of ink!

(Cixous 1977, p.37)

Cixous has produced over twenty texts since the mid-sixties. They range from studies of the breakdown of language and logic in Lewis Carrol and James Joyce through recitations by man-oppressed speakers, manifestos for feminine writing, lyrical celebrations of the evolution of women's subjectivity and, recently, collage-like representations of collaboration among women, such as Vivre l'orange (1979) and With, ou l'art de l'innocence (1981). Vivre l'orange is a poetic essay dramatizing and reflecting upon Cixous discovery of a Brazilian poet and novelist, Clarice Lispector.

A woman's voice came to me from far away, like a voice from a birth-town, it brought me insights that I once had, intimate insights, native and knowing, ancient and fresh like the yellow and violet color of freshias [sic] rediscovered, this voice was unknown to me, it reached me on the twelfth of October 1978, this voice was not searching for me, it was writing to no one, to all women, to writing, in a foreign tongue, I do not speak it but my heart understands it, and its silent words in all the veins of my life have translated themselves into mad blood, into joy-blood.

(Cixous 1979, p. 10)

Any critical approach to l'ecriture feminine must come to terms with Cixous theory and strategies for inscribing a feminine unconscious.

Counter-views and counter-genres: Monique Wittig and Questions feministes

This summary has been intended to suggest that varying theories of difference produce diverse approaches to what is defined as a libratory text.

From a materialist/Marxist point of view, she argues, attempts to define a feminine subjectivity in contrast to phallocentric views of women founder upon masculine/feminine oppositions rather than moving beyond them. Wittig calls instead for a politically motivated deconstruction of the term 'woman' itself, through a historical analysis of the moves through which men have mystified women's biological potentials into a supposedly unchanging female 'nature' –which, she points out, the celebrants of feminite, glorify rather than call into question:

Our first task ... is to dissociate 'women' (the class within which we fight) and 'woman', the myth. For 'woman'... is only an imaginary formation, while 'women' is the product of a social relationship.... Furthermore, we have to destroy the myth inside and outside ourselves.

(Wittig 1981, pp. 50-1)

Because lesbians occupy a sociosexual position outside the man/woman dyad, Wittig concludes that a lesbian is not a woman: 'Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject is *not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically' (p. 53).

When we find that women are the objects of oppression... we become subjects, in the sense of cognitive subjects.

(Wittig 1979, p.74)

Wittig rejects Kristeva's negativity (the outsider's stance toward the symbolic), Irigaray's interiorized model of femininity, and Cixous's faith in the speech of the womanly unconscious. She carries out instead a deliberate appropriation of male-derived genres: the schoolgirls' anti-patriarchal Bildungsroman, L'Opoponax; the lesbian epic, Les Guerilleres; the regendering of masculine celebration of the female body, Le Corps lesbien; the utopian women's history implied in the old and new words defined in Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes (Lesbian People's Material for a Dictionary) (Wenzel 1981).

Franco-feminist criticism: can there be one?

Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray all concede, though less emphatically than Wittig, the need for practical political action by women. For Kristeva, transgression of the symbolic on the printed page has seemed identical to political resistance (Kristeva 1969, p.65). Cixous insists that transformations of subjectivity must precede social transformation; in fact, she rejects feminism as a movement too much like men's, a search for power that imitates rather than transcends the phallogocentric order (Cixous 1976a, p.23). Irigaray remarks, 'For a woman to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a woman, a long detour via the analysis of the various systems that oppress her, is certainly necessary' (Irigaray 1977a, p. 105); but in her early 1980s publications she gave priority to the transcription of new versions of parler femme.

For the feminist critic who thinks of her work as a more or less direct form of political action, the conceptual framework of difference and ecriture feminine present striking difficulties. Even if she accepts Irigaray's or Cixous definition of femininity as a basis for interpretation, how is she to approach the anti-symbolic, diffuse, libidinally charged texts produced by women – or, according to Kristeva, by men? Is there any point in applying feminist versions of more recent critical methods to such texts? Franco-feminist criticism resists any easy pluralist assimilation.

Franco-feminist critics commenting on the theory and practice of feminine writing consistently make gestures in this direction.

Our presentation will be divided and fragmentary in the image of the woman's body and the theories, which attempt to explain her difference.

(Feral 1978, p.3)

Gallop sets an analysis of Kristeva's remarks about feminism in one column of print, against another comment on Kristeva's emphasis on maternity, pointing out simultaneously the repression in Kristeva's text and its implicit bias:

The digression has an insistent force that perverts and deforms the sentence. 'Supermen' appears, not even italicized, in Kristeva's French text.

Is Kristeva's move from the impossible heterosexuality of 'Polylogue' to the impossible maternity of 'L' Herethique'; in other words, is the move from the Lacanian scandal to the maternal scandal progress or regression? This question rejoins the problem of whether the maternal is conservative and imaginary or disruptive and semiotic. And uncomfortable as it is (precisely because it is uncomfortable), we must try to sit on the horns of that dilemma. Of course, heterosexuality is always implied by maternity. Expect in the case of the Virgin...

(Gallop 1982, p. 129)

Certainly, the theories of Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous are bounded by distinct limits of time and place.

Franco-feminist criticism:four varieties

Four methods have been evolving in Franco-feminist criticism since the 1970s. The two most generally used are the deconstruction of magisterial texts and traditions, and the attention to silences, to what is repressed or only obliquely suggested in women-authored texts. A second set explicatory strategies includes the decoding of feminine/semiotic modes of writing and a close reading of the politics of style, in the work of women writers and also, arguably, in men's writing, to the extent that certain male writers' marginality to mainstream sexual and socio-literary conventions leads them to produce 'feminine' – writing. Proust and Genet are heroes to many Franco-feminist critics.

Deconstruction

Franco-feminist deconstruction has so far been aimed largely at male-authored texts. Felman poses the problem of how such a double marginality can be represented:

How can the woman be thought about outside of the Masculine/ feminine framework, other than as opposed to man, without being subordinated to a primordial masculine model? How can difference as such be thought out as non-subordinate to identity? In other words, how can thought break away from the logic of polar opposition?

(Felman 1975, p.4)

Repeating his name over and over to her, Philippe pushes the therapy forward; but at the moment he seems to succeed (she says 'adieu' again), Stephanie dies. Felman sums up the hero's position as follows:

Stephanie's recovery of her 'reason', the restoration of her femininity as well as of her identity, depends then, in Philippe's eyes, on her specular recognition of him, on her refection of his own name and his own identity. If the question of female identity remains in the text unanswered, it is simply because it is never truly asked: in the guise of asking 'She? Who?' Philippe is in fact always asking 'I? Who'

(Felman 1975, p.8)

Felman then moves to consider how academic criticism reproduces Philippes narcissistic effacement of the woman. Felman comments:

The 'explication' thus excludes two things: the madness and the woman. Viewed through the eyes of the two, Adieu becomes a story about the suffering of man in which the real protagonists are none but 'the soldiers of the Grand Army'.

(p.5)

Hearing Silences

The second approach in Franco-feminist criticism, is to listen 'otherwise', to read between the lines for desires or states of mind that cannot be articulated in the social arena and the language of phallocentrism. Resistance to official discourses, the breaking of taboos and the exploration of homosexual or otherwise anti-patriarchal relationships are often perceived in the interstices of single texts or of collections of texts.

One subtext given major emphasis by Franco-feminist critics is the role of the mother in mother-daughter relationship. Mother-daughter bonds also interest Ronnie Scharfman in her comparison of two contemporary women's texts, Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea and Simone Schwartz-Bart's Pluie et vent sur Telumee miracle. In addition, alertness to the suppression of the maternal can add depth to historical studies of male-authored texts, as in

Coppelia Kahn's study of King Lear (Kahn 1982) Stephen Orgel's commentary on The Tempest (Orgel 1984) and Louis Montrose's study of power plays in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Montrose 1983).

Decoding the feminine Semiotic

The third approach that of feeling out the feminine, anti-symbolic elements in a woman's text, seems potentially a rather nebulous or problematic procedure. If corporeal, libidinal ecriture feminine moves against the grain of masculine, objectivity claiming discourse, how is the critic to analyze such writing in abstract metalanguage?

She then does some fairly conventional analysis of the numerological and mythic patterns in the novel, but she also suggests that it requires its reader to identify in simultaneously emotional and political terms with its central figure:

The Euguelionne is the woman of today, now and in centuries to come.... She exists in actuality in the daughter and the mother in all of us.... She is the woman of the present who is rising within us, who struggles, who frees herself, who feels delight [jouit], who weeps.

(p.97)

The politics of style

Burke's presentations of Irigaray, are admirably clear and informative, however, and they demonstrate one way through the dilemma of distancing analysis versus participatory immersion in a text: to examine the writing for its sexual politics - that is, to draw out the connections between its grammatical, figurative and structural patterns and the theory of femininity underling it. Whether applied to women-authored or man -authored texts, however, Franco-feminist 'close reading' departs from the 'neutral' rhetorical explication of New Criticism and from structuralism's 'scientific' enumeration of binary oppositions. Burke's presentation of her translation of Irigaray's 'When Our Lips Speak Together' typifies the Franco-feminist approach.

In Les Guerilleres, Wittig mostly avoids words for woman (la femme, les femmes), repeating instead the feminine plural elles- in order, Wenzel explains, 'to designate the collective female protagonist, thus emphasizing women as an historical and social class, rather woman as an immutable feminine essence'.

Critics opposing Wittig to Cixous, for example, base their arguments on the political implications of style. Diane Griffin Crowder attacks Cixous's use of metaphor, arguing that the parallels she draws between women's writing and their bodily outpourings (blood, milk) imply that biological maternity defines women. In support, she quotes Cixous in 'The Laugh of the Medusa':

We're not going to repress something so simple as the desire for life. Oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive- all these drives are our strengths, and among them is the gestation drive – just like the desire to live self form within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood.

(Crowder 1983, p. 139)

If difference is taken as a repertoire of verbal possibilities, their intersection in men and women writers and their effects on readers seem promising fields of investigation (Fremont 1979; DuPlessis 1980).

Every belief about 'what women are', rises political as well as aesthetic problems, and Franco-feminist theory, given its assertions about pre-verbal and unconscious activity that must finally remain conjectural, is no exception. Irigaray and Cixous often seem to be describing women's subjectivity on the basis of biological and psychic traits that might have enormously different effects in different social situations (Plaza 1978; Brown and Adams

1979). Claims for the emergence of a new feminine language can be called into question as well.

Our political pragmatism, empiricism and search for a women's literary history are already intersecting in provocative ways with French interrogations of the politics of discourse, the processes of the unconscious and the outlines of a future a la feminine. Feminist investigations of textual politics must take place in more language than one-or even two.

Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne

Freud argues that the only libido is masculine. Meaning what? Other than that a whole field, which is hardly negligible, is thereby ignored. This is the field of all those beings who take on the status of the woman - if, indeed, this being takes on anything whatsoever of her fate.

Lacan, Le seminaire XX: Encore (1972-3), Paris 1975, p. 75; (tr. Feminine Sexuality, p. 151.)

The works of Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne on female sexuality return to and extend the psychoanalytic debate of the 1920s and 30s over femininity and sexual difference in Freud.[131] They return to it by insisting that its implications for psychoanalysis have still not been understood; they extend it in so far as the issue itself – the question of feminine sexuality – goes beyond psychoanalysis to feminism, as part of its questioning of how that sexuality comes to be defined.

In this context, the idea of a 'return to Freud' most commonly associated with Lacan has a very specific meaning. It is not so much a return to the letter of Freud's text as the re-opening of a case, a case that has already been fought and one, which, if anything, in relation to feminism, Freud could be, said to have lost. In fact the relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism might seem to start at the point where Freud's account of sexual difference was rejected by analysts, specifically arguing for women ('men analysts have been led to adopt an unduly phallocentric view').[132] Most analysts have since agreed on the limitations and difficulties of Freud's account. The concept of the phallus stands for that subjection, and for the way in which women are very precisely implicated in its process.

The history of psychoanalysis can in many ways be seen entirely in terms of its engagement with this question of feminine sexuality. Freud himself started with the analysis of the hysterical patient[133] (whom, it should be noted, he insisted could also be male) [134]. Normal sexuality is, therefore, strictly an ordering, one, which the hysteric refuses (falls ill). Moreover, Freud returned to this question at the moment when he was reformulating his theory of human subjectivity. Lacan took Freud's concept of the unconscious, as extended

131 This essay was originally published as the second part of the Introduction to Feminine Sexuality – Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne, edited by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, London 1982, New York 1983, a collection of articles relating to the question of feminine sexuality by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and members of his school of psychoanalysis, the ecole freudienne, founded in 1964 and dissolved by Lacan in 1980.

132 Ernest Jones, 'The Early Development of Female Sexuality', International Journal of Psychoanalysis 8, 1927, p. 459.

133 Breuer and Freud, Studies on Hysteria.

134 Freud, 'Observation of a Severe Case of Hemi-Anaesthesia in a Hysterical Male' (1886), SE 1

and developed by the later texts[135] as the basis of his own account of femininity (the frequent criticism of Lacan that he disregarded the later works is totally unfounded here). For by restoring the woman to her place and identity (which, they argue, Freud out of 'prejudice' failed to see), they have missed Freud's corresponding stress on the division and precariousness of human subjectivity itself, which was, for Lacan, central to psychoanalysis' most radical insights. Attempts by, and for women to answer Freud, have tended to relinquish those insights, discarding either the concept of the unconscious (the sign of that division), or that of bisexuality (the sign of that precariousness).

Re-opening the debate on feminine sexuality must start, therefore, with the link between sexuality and the unconscious. No account of Lacan's workwhich attempts to separate the two can make sense. For Lacan, the unconscious undermines the subject from any position of certainty, from any relation of knowledge to his or her psychic processes and history, and simultaneously reveals the fictional nature of the sexual category to which every human subject is nonetheless assigned. In Lacan's account, sexual identity operates as a law – it is something enjoyed on the subject.

For Lacan, the description of sexuality in development terms invariably loses sight of Freud's most fundamental discovery–which the unconscious never ceases to challenge our apparent identity as subjects.

Lacan's account of subjectivity was always developed with reference to the idea of a fiction. For Lacan, however this is already a fantasy - the very image, which places the child, divides its identity into two. Furthermore, that moment only has meaning in relation to the presence and the look of the mother who guarantees its reality for the child. The mother does not (as in D. W. Winnicott's account) [136] mirror the child to itself; she grants an image to the child, which her presence instantly deflects. The mirror image is central to Lacan's account of subjectivity, because its apparent smoothness and totality is a myth.

Lacan then takes the mirror image as the model of the ego function itself, the category that enables the subject to operate as 'I'. [137] For Lacan the subject is constituted through language – the mirror image represents the moment when the subject is located in an order outside itself to which it will henceforth refer. The subject is the subject of speech (Lacan's '<u>Parle-etre</u>'), and subject *to* that order. Language can only operate by designating an object in its absence. Lacan takes this further, and states that symbolization turns on the object as absence. He gives as his reference Freud's early account of the child's hallucinatory cathexes of the object for which it cries, and his later description in Beyond the Pleasure Principle of the child's symbolization of the absent mother in play.[138] For Lacan, the subject can only operate within language by constantly repeating that moment of fundamental and irreducible division. The subject is therefore constituted in language as the division or splitting (Freud's <u>Ichspaltung</u>, or splitting of the ego).

135 Freud, <u>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</u> (1920), SE 18, PF 11; '<u>Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence</u>' (1938), SE 23, PF 11.

136 D.W. Winnicott, 'Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development' (1967), <u>Playing and Reality</u>, London 1971.

137 Emile Benvensite, 'La nature des pronoms', <u>Problemes de linguistique generale</u> (tr.'The Nature of Pronouns', Problems in General Linguistics).

138 Freud, <u>Project for a Scientific Psychology</u> (1895), SE 1, p. 319; <u>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</u>, pp. 14-17; pp. 283-287.

The real was then his term for the moment of impossibility onto which both are grafted, the point of that moment's endless return[139] Lacan's account of childhood then follows this basic premise that identity is constructed in language, but only at a cost. Lacan terms this 'desire'. The concept of desire is crucial to Lacan's account of sexuality. Lacan calls this the other – the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers.

There is a tendency, when arguing for the re-given nature of sexual difference, for the specificity of male and female drives, to lose sight of the more radical aspects of Freud's work on sexuality – his insistence on the disjunction between the sexual object and the sexual aim, his difficult challenge to the concept of perversion, and his demand that heterosexual object-choice be explained and not assumed.[140] The term 'vicissitude', indicates a fundamental difficulty inherent in human sexuality, which can be seen in the very concept of the drive.
The drive is divisible into pressure, source, object and aim; and it challenges any straightforward concept of satisfaction – the drive can be sublimated and Freud described its object as 'indifferent'. For Lacan, that process reveals all the difficulty that characterizes the subject's relationship to the other. Although Freud did at times describe the drive in terms of an economy of pleasure (the idea that tension is resolved when the drive achieved its aim), Lacan points to an opposite stress in Freud's work. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, when Freud described the child's game with the cotton reel, what he identified in that game was a process of pure repetition, which revolved around the object as, lost. Freud termed this the death drive. Lacan calls this jouissance (literally 'orgasm', but used by Lacan to refer to something more than pleasure which can easily tip into its opposite). The 'fact' of sexed reproduction marks the subject as 'subject to' death.[141]

[142]At moments, therefore, it looks as if Lacan too is grounding his theory of representation in the biological facts of life. If there is no straightforward biological sequence, and no satisfaction of the drive, then the idea of a complete and assured sexual identity belongs in the realm of fantasy.
The structure of the drive and what Lacan calls the 'nodal point' of desire are the two concepts in his work as a whole, which undermine a normative account of human sexuality, and they have repercussions right across the analytic setting. Lacan considered that an emphasis on genital maturation tends to produce a dualism of the analytic relationship that can only reinforce the imaginary identifications of the subject. The case of Dora, illustrates only too, well that the question of feminine sexuality brings with it that of psychoanalytic technique[143]. By asking Dora to realize her 'identity' through Herr K., Freud was

139 This can be compared with, for example, Melanie Klein's account of symbol-formation (Melanie Klein, 'The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego', IJPA 11, 1930) and also with Hannah Segal's ('Notes on Symbol formation', IJPA 38, 1957), where symbolization is an effect of anxiety and a mean of transcending it on the path to reality, a path which is increasingly assured by the strengthening of the ego itself. Cf., also Lacan's specific critique of Ernest Jones's famous article on symbolism (Ernest Jones, 'The Theory of Symbolism', British Journal of Psychoanalysis 11:2, 1916 and Jacques Lacan, 'A la memoire d'Ernest Jones: sur sa theorie de symbolisme' (1959), Ecrits) which he criticized for its definition of language in terms of an increasing mastery or appropriation of reality, and for failing to see, therefore, the structure of metaphor (or substitution) which lies at the root of, and is endlessly repeated within, subjectivity in its relation to the unconscious.

140 Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905), SE 7, pp. 144-146n; PF 7, p.57n.

141 The Four Fundamental Concepts, p. 205.

142 ibid., p. 181.

143 See Lacan, 'Intervention on Transference'; also 'Dora – Fragment of an Analysis' in this collection.

simultaneously asking her to meet, or reflect, his own demand. For Lacan, there was always this risk that psychoanalysis will strengthen for the patient the idea of self-completion through another, which was the fantasy the earliest mother-child relationship. If the analyst indicates to the patient that she or he 'desire this or that object',[144] this can only block the emergence of desire itself.

As was the case with Freud, the concept of castration came into Lacan's account of sexuality as the direct effect of this emphasis. For Lacan, the increasing stress on the mother-child relationship in analytic theory, and the rejection of the concept of castration had to be seen as related developments, because the latter only makes sense with reference to the wider symbolic order in which that relationship is played out:

Addressing Melanie Klein, Lacan makes it clear that the argument for a reintroduction of the concept of desire into the definition of human sexuality is a return to, and a reformulation of, the law and the place of the father as it was originally defined by Freud ('a dimension increasingly evaded since Freud'[145]):

> **Melanie Klein describes the relationship to the mother, as a mirrored relationship: the maternal body becomes the receptacle of the drives which the child projects onto it, drives motivated by aggression born of a fundamental disappointment.**[146]

Lacan argued, therefore, for a return to the concept of the father, but this concept is now defined in relation to that of desire. The mother is refused to the child in so far as a prohibition falls on the child's desire to be what the mother desires (not the same, note, as a desire to possess or enjoy the mother in the sense normally understood):

> **What we meet as an accident in the child's development, is linked to the fact that the child does not find himself or herself alone in front of the mother, and that the phallus forbids the child, the satisfaction of his or her own desire, which is the desire to be the exclusive desire of the mother.**[147]

The duality of the relation between mother and child must be broken, just as the analytic relation must be thrown onto the axis of desire. In Lacan's account, the phallus stands for that moment of rupture. It refers mother and child to the dimension of the symbolic which is figured by the father's place. (cf. pp.69-70 below). Castration means first of all this – that the child's desire for the mother does not refer to her but beyond her, to an object, the phallus, whose status is first imaginary (the object presumed to satisfy her desire) and then symbolic (recognition that desire cannot be satisfied).

The place of the phallus in the account, therefore, follows from Lacan's return to the position and law of the father, but this concept has been reformulated in relation to that of desire. Lacan uses the term 'paternal metaphor', metaphor having a very specific meaning here. The father is a function and refers to a law, the place outside the imaginary dyad and

144 Lacan, Le seminaire II: Le moi dans la theorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (1954-55), paris 1978, p. 267 (tr. Sylvana Tomaselli, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, forthcoming, Cambridge 1987).

145 'La phase phallique et la portee subjective du complexe de castration, Scilicet 1, 1968; tr. 'The Phallic Phase and the Subjective Import of the castration complex, Feminine sexuality, p. 117. Scilicet was the review published in Lacan's series, Le champ freudien, at Edition du Seuil in Paris; apart from those by Lacan, the articles in the first issues were unsigned.

146 Lacan, 'Les formations de l'inconscient', Bulletin de Psychologie 2, 1957-58, p. 13.

147 'Les formations de l'inconscient', p. 14.

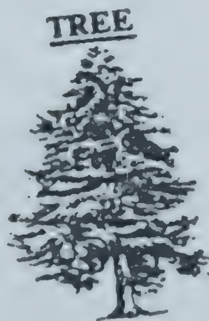
against which it breaks[148] Lacan's position should be read against two alternative emphases – on the actual behaviour of the mother alone (adequacy and inadequacy), and on a literally present or absent father (his idealization and/or deficiency).

The phallus needs to be placed on the axis of desire, before it can be understood, or questioned, as the differential mark of sexual identification (boy or girl, having or not having the phallus). By breaking the imaginary dyad, the phallus represents a moment of division (Lacan calls this the subject's 'lack-in-being'), which re-enacts the fundamental splitting of subjectivity itself. And by jarring against any naturalist account of sexuality ('phallocentrism ... strictly impossible to deduce from any pre-established harmony of the said psyche to the nature it expresses'),[149] the phallus relegates sexuality to a strictly other dimension – the order of the symbolic outside of which, for Lacan, sexuality cannot be understood. The importance of the phallus is that its status in the development of human sexuality is something which nature cannot account for.

Only if this is dropped from the account, can the phallus be taken to represent an unproblematic assertion of male privilege, or else lead to reformulations intended to guarantee the continuity of sexual development for both sexes (Jones).

It is that very continuity which is challenged in Lacan's account. Just as it was Freud's failure to apply the concept of castration, literally to the girl child, which brought him up against the concept of desire.[150]

The subject then takes up his or her identity with reference to the phallus, but that identity is thereby designated symbolic (it is something enjoined on the subject). Thus Lacan replaces Saussure's model for the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign:



(which is indeed open to the objection that it seems to reflect a theory of language based on a correspondence between words and things), with this model:[151]

'Any speaking being whatever' must line up on one or other side of the divide[152]

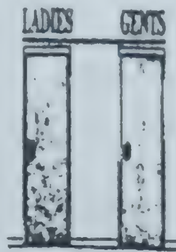
148 Safouan, p. 127.

149 Lacan, 'D'une question preliminaire a tout traitement possible de la psychose' (1955-56), Ecrits (tr. 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis', Ecrits: A Selection, p. 198).

150 For a fuller discussion of both of these points see 'The Phallic Phase', and 'Feminine Sexuality in Psychoanalytic Doctrine', in Feminine Sexuality.

151 Lacan, 'L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud' (1957), Ecrits (tr. 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud', Ecrits: A Selection, p. 151).

152 Lacan, 'Une letter d'amour', Le seminaire XX: Encore (1972-73), Paris 1975 (tr. 'A Love Letter', Feminine Sexuality, p. 150).



Sexual difference is then assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not posses the phallus, which means not that anatomical difference is sexual difference (the one as strictly deducible from the other), but that anatomical difference comes to figure sexual difference, that is, it becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be.

II

Three points emerge from what has been described so far:

1. anatomy is what figures in the account: for me "anatomy is not destiny", but that does not mean that anatomy does not figure',[153] but it only figures (it is a sham);
2. the phallus stands at its own expense and any male privilege erected upon it is an imposture: 'what might be called a man, the male speaking being, strictly disappears as an effect of discourse,... by being inscribed within it solely as castration',[154] woman is not inferior, she is subjected:

It is the strength of the concept of the symbolic that it systematically repudiates any account of sexuality, which assumes the pre-given nature of sexual difference – the polemic within psychoanalysis and the challenge to any such 'nature' by feminism, appear at their closest here. But a problem remains. Lacan's use of the symbolic at this stage relied heavily on Levi-Strauss's notion of kinship in which women are defined as objects of exchange.

In the later texts, Lacan located the fantasy of 'sameness' within language and the sexual relation at one and the same time. 'There of no sexual relation' because subjects relate through what makes sense in language[155] Psychoanalysis states meaning to be sexual, but it has left behind any notion of a repressed sexuality which it would somehow allow to speak.

We could say that Lacan has taken the relationship between the unconscious and sexuality and has pushed it to its furthest extreme, producing an account of sexuality solely in terms of its divisions – the division of the subject, division between subjects (as opposed to relation).

The man places the woman at the basis of his fantasy, or constitutes fantasy through the woman. Lacan moved away, therefore, from the idea of a problematic but socially assured

153 Safouan, La sexualite feminine p.131.

154 L'envers de la psychanalyse, 12, p. 4.

155 Lacan's term for Saussure's langue (language) from the latter's distinction between langue (the formal organization of language) and parole (speech), the individual utterance. Lacan's term displaces this opposition in so far as, for him, the organization of language can only be understood in terms of the subject's relationship to it. Lalangue indicates that part of language which reflects the laws of unconscious processess, but whose effects go beyond that reflection, and escape the grasp of the subject. (See Encore, pp. 126-127).

process of exchange (woman as objects) to the construction of woman as a category within language (woman as **the** object, the fantasy of her definition). What is now exposed in the account is 'a carrying over onto the woman of the difficulty inherent in sexuality' itself.[156]

Lacan's later work on femininity, especially the seminar Encore, belongs tc this development. For whereas in the earlier texts the emphasis was on the circulation of the phallus in the process of sexual exchange, it is now effectively stated that if it is the phallus that circulates then there is no exchange (or relation). The question then becomes not so much the 'difficulty' of feminine sexuality consequent on phallic division, as what it means, given that division, to speak of the 'woman' at all.

> **It is at a more radical stage, constitutive of those very rules themselves, that Freud points to one last question by indicating that it is the woman who comes to act as their support.**[157]

In the later texts, the central term is the object small a [object a], Lacan's formula for the lost object which underpins symbolization, cause of and 'stand in' for desire.[158] As the place onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed, woman is a 'symptom' for the man.

Defined as such, reduced to being nothing other than this fantasmatic place, the woman does not exist. Lacan's statement 'The woman does not exist' is, therefore, the corollary of his accusation, or charge, against sexual fantasy. It means, not that women do not exist, but that her status as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy (exactly **The** woman) is false (The). Lacan sees courtly love as the elevation of the woman into the place where her absence or inaccessibility stands in for male lack ('For the man, whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject, courtly love is the only way of coming off elegantly from the absence of sexual relation) [159] just as he sees her denigration as the precondition for man's belief in his own soul ('For the soul to come into being, she, the woman, is differentiated from it ... called woman and defamed').[160] In relation to the man, woman comes to stand for both difference and loss: 'On the one hand, the woman becomes, or is produced, precisely as what he is not, that is, sexual difference , and on the other, as what he has to renounce, that is, jouissance.'[161]

Woman is excluded by the nature of words, meaning that the definition poses her as exclusion. Note that this is not the same thing as saying that woman is excluded from the nature of words, a misreading which leads to the recasting of the whole problem in terms of woman's place outside language, the idea that woman might have of themselves an entirely different speech.

156 'The Phallic Phase', p. 118.

157 Ibid., pp. 118-119.

158 'A Love Letter, p. 157.

159 Lacan, 'Dieu et la jouissance de La femme', Encore (tr. 'God and the Jouissance of The woman', Feminine sexuality, p. 141).

160 'A Love Letter', p. 156.

161 Lacan, Le seminaire XVIII: D'un discours qui ne sera pas semblant (1970-71), 6, pp. 9-10; see also Otto Fenichel, in a paper to which Lacan often referred, on the refusal of difference which underpins the Girl = Phallus equation frequently located as a male fantasy: 'the differentness of woman is denied in both cases; in the one case, in the attempt to repress women altogether, in the other, in denying their individuality'. (Otto Fenichel, 'The Symbolic Equation: Girl = Phallus', Psychoanalytic Quarterly 18:3, 1949, p.13.)

If woman is 'not all', writes Lacan, then 'she' can hardly refer to all women. As negative to the man, woman becomes a total object of fantasy (or an object of total fantasy), elevated into the place of the other and made to stand for its truth. In so far as God 'has not made his exit',[162] so the woman becomes the support of his symbolic place. The object a, cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of the woman as other who then acts as its guarantee. The absolute 'Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth.

The other crossed through (ó) stands against this knowledge as the place of division where meaning falters, where it slips and shifts. It is the place of significance, Lacan's term for this very movement in language against, or away from, the positions of coherence which language simultaneously constructs. The other therefore stands against the phallus – its pretence to meaning and false consistency. It is from the other that the phallus seeks authority and is refused.

The woman is implicated, of necessity, in phallic sexuality, but at the same time it is 'elsewhere that she upholds the question of her own jouissance',[163] that is, the question of her status as desiring subject. Lacan designates this jouissance supplementary so as to avoid any notion of complement, of woman as a complement to man's phallic nature (which is precisely the fantasy). Woman is, therefore, placed beyond (beyond the phallus).

Lacan's reference to woman as Other needs, therefore, to be seen as an attempt to hold apart two moments which are in constant danger of collapsing into each other – that which assigns woman to the negative place of its own (phallic) system, and that which asks the question as to whether women might, as a very effect of that assignation, break against and beyond that system itself. For Lacan, that break is always within language; it is the break of the subject in language. The concept of jouissance (what escapes in sexuality) and the concept of significance (what shifts within language) are inseparable.

A tension, which can be recognized in the very query 'What does a woman want?' On which Freud stalled and to which Lacan returned. Towards the end of his work, Lacan talked of woman's 'anti-phallic' nature as leaving her open to that 'which of the unconscious cannot be spoken' (a reference to women analysts in which we can recognize, ironically, the echo of Freud's conviction that they would have access to a different strata of psychic life) [164] In relation to the earlier texts we could say that woman no longer masquerades, she defaults: 'the jouissance of the woman does not go without saying, that is, without the saying of truth',

162 'A Love Letter', pp. 160, 154.

163 'The Phallic Phase', p. 121.

164 Ornicar?, 20-21, Summer 1980, p.12. At the time of writing Lacan had just dissolved his school in Paris, rejoining in the utterance through which he represented that act – 'Je pere- severe' ('I persevere' – the pun is on 'per' and 'pere' (father)) – the whole problem of mastery and paternity which has cut across the institutional history of his work. From the early stand against a context which he (and others) considered authoritarian, and the cancellation, as its effect, of his seminar on the Name of the Father in 1953, to the question of mastery and transference which lay behind the further break in 1964, and which so clearly surfaces in the dissolution here. It has been the endless paradox of Lacan's position that he has provided the most systematic critique of forms of identification and transference which, by dint of this very fact, he has come most totally to represent. That a number of woman analysts (cf. note 85, and Introduction pp. 3-5) have found their position in relation to this to be an impossible one, only confirms the close relation between the question of feminine sexuality and the institutional divisions and difficulties of psychoanalysis itself.

whereas for the man 'his jouissance suffices which is precisely why he understands nothing'.[165]

In so far as it is the order of language which structures sexuality around the male term, or the privileging of that term which shows sexuality to be constructed within language, so this raises the issue of women's relationship to that language and that sexuality simultaneously. The question of the body of the girl child (what she may or may not know of that body) as posed in the earlier debate, becomes the question of the woman's body as language (what, of that body, can achieve symbolization). The objective is to retrieve the woman from the dominance of the phallic term, and from language at one and the same time. What this means is that femininity is assigned to a point of origin prior to the mark of symbolic difference and the law. The privileged relationship of women to that origin, gives them access to an archaic form of expressivity outside the circuit of linguistic exchange.

This point of origin is the maternal body, an undifferentiated space, and yet one in which the girl child recognizes herself. In the argument for a primordial femininity, it is clear that the relation between the mother and child is conceived of as dyadic and simply reflective (one to one - the girl child fully knows herself in the mother) which once again precludes the concept of desire. Feminine specificity is, therefore, predicated directly onto the concept of an unmediated and unproblematic relation to origin.

Women are returned, therefore, in the account and to each other - against the phallic term but also against the loss of origin which Lacan's account is seen to imply. It is therefore a refusal of division, which gives the woman access to different strata of language, where words and things are not differentiated, and the real of the maternal body threatens or holds off woman's access to prohibition and the law.

For Lacan, as we have seen, there is no pre-discursive reality ('How return, other than by means of a special discourse, to a pre-discursive reality?'),[166] no place prior to the law which is available and can be retrieved. First, because the unconscious severs the subject from any unmediated relation to the body as such ('there is nothing in the unconscious which accords with the body'),[167] and secondly because the 'feminine is constituted as a division in language, a division which produces the feminine as its negative term. If woman is defined as other, it is because the definition produces her as other, and not because she has another essence. Lacan does not refuse difference ('if there was no difference how could I say there was no sexual relation'[168] but for him, what is to be questioned is the seeming 'consistency' of that difference – of the body or anything else – the division it enjoins, the definitions of the woman it produces.

For Lacan, to say that difference is 'phallic' difference is to expose the symbolic and arbitrary nature of its division as such. The demands against Lacan, therefore, collapse two different levels of objection - that the body should be mediated by language and that the privileged term of that mediation be male.

Psychoanalysis does not produce that definition. The former relegates women outside language and history; the latter simply subordinates them to both. Lacan's writing gives an account of how the status of the phallus in human sexuality enjoins on the woman a definition

165 Les non-dupes errent, 7, p. 16.

166 Encore, p. 33.

167 'Seminar of 21 January, 1975', p. 165.

168 Les non-dupes errent, 4. p. 18.

in which she is simultaneously a symptom and a myth. As long as we continue to feel the effects of that definition, we cannot afford to ignore this description of the fundamental imposture which sustains it.

The End of a Misogynist Parade: Lacanian Psychoanalysis*

Psychoanalysis has not completely achieved its break with Western metaphysics (that we refuse to qualify as 'epistemological'). Its roots in this metaphysics (as defined and criticized by Nietzsche) are visible in the resurgence of moral criteria of judgment (that are contradictory to analytical ethics). This reintroduction of morals is done in a very particular way, by always tending to exonerate the father and by blaming the mother.

This contradiction appears most obviously in the case of the psychoanalysis of children. In fact, the psychoanalyses of children present us with a particular situation where the analyst cannot withdraw from a confrontation with the parents.

Let us take the case of Monique ($14^{1/2}$), related at the end of Psychoanalyse et. pediatrie. F. Dolto concludes thus:

Here is an eloquent example of what we call family neurosis. In Monique's case, we can see the heavy responsibility of a neurotic father – himself an enemy of women, and a homosexual who doesn't know it. However, let us not accuse him too soon.

What we see in F. Dolto's text is an undertaking by Judeo-Christian philosophy to recuperate psychoanalysis. The subject is not the subject of free will, of goodwill or ill will, but the subject of a desire whose structure he is seeking to decipher.

Why not an impotent father or castrating brothers? It is true that the adjective 'castrating' is rarely used in the masculine; for psychoanalysts this qualifier seems to apply to woman. When it degenerates into moralizing psychology, psychoanalysis constantly tends to orient its search for 'responsibilities' on the side of women. The mirror test constitutes a nodal moment of development. For the child the mirror stage represents the moment of discovery of its bodily identity, whence its decisive role in 'anal castration', defined as 'the separation from the mother for the dependence of excremental needs, and from the bodily help of the mother for everything concerning dressing, toilet, looking after its body, satisfaction of its needs as well as the satisfaction of bodily pleasure sought by the child'.[169]

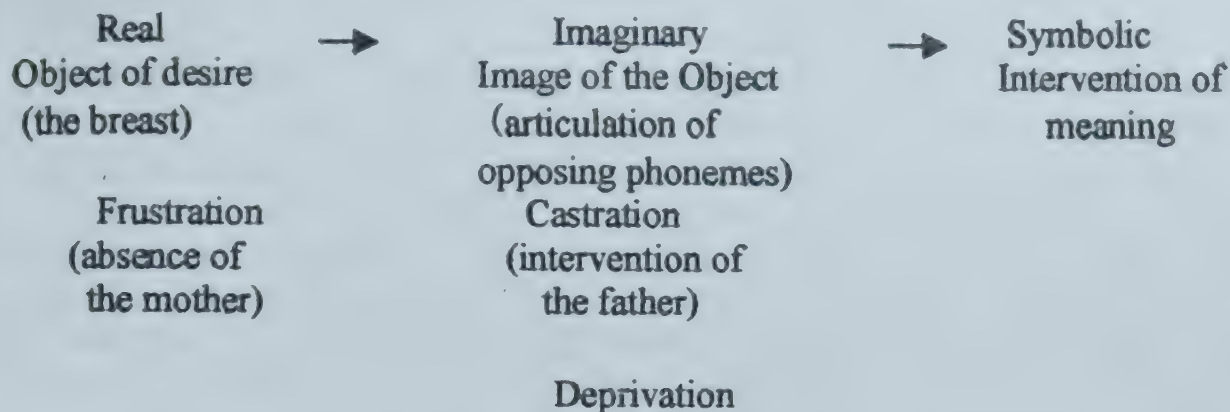
The initial subject/object fusion of a child is broken. [...] The child carried by the mother straightens up before the mirror, beyond its own height, thus becoming equal, in an imaginary way, to the adult holding it.

It is only when the father intervenes in the dual [mother-child] relationship, that the child can be snatched away from the fascination of images to once again find its speech and language in symbolic structure. Socialization cannot take place through imaginary structures, but by acceding to the symbolic. ' It is not so much a question of a real father, as of a symbolic father, described or signified by the mother's discourse'.[170] Hence it is the introduction of the father in the mother's speech that ensures the appearance of meaning, which is, strictly speaking, access to the symbolic, thus thwarting the traps of the mirror, and of the dual confrontation with the mother. If one goes back to Lacanian terminology to define the different registers of the lack of an object (differentiating between: castration, the relation of the child to the father, symbolic lack of an imaginary object; the breast, deprivation, real lack of a symbolic object), an evolutionary schema can be given as follows:

* This essay appeared in Les Temps Modernes, No. 348, July 1975, pp. 1333-53.

169 F. Dolto, 'Au jeu du desir les des sont pipes et. les cartes truquees', Bulletin de la Societe Francaise de Philosophie, October-December 1972, p. 134.

170 Ibid., emphasis original.



Frustration and castration are the two 'normal' phenomena that must occur at certain moments of the child's development marked by them: frustration ensures the passing from the real to the imaginary, castration from the imaginary to the symbolic. What is traumatizing for a child is not the lack of a real object, but the lack of a symbolic object. Deprived of the maternal signifier, they have remained prisoners of the imaginary, dual relations with the mother, since there is no intervention from this castrating third person, which is the father, the one who forbids the mother, who upholds law and represents culture.

What is required for the harmonious development of the child, is not a real but a 'symbolic father', 'described or signified by the mother's discourse. And this is why it is not so much the absence of a real father which is catastrophic for the child's future, it is the fact that the mother does not introduce the father in her speech'.[171] For the child to have access to the symbolic, therefore, the father and the mother, both have a very specific role to play. Moreover, it would be more correct to say: the real mother and the symbolic father, both have a very specific role to play.

What structures the mother's discourse, is the place and the meaning the paternal signifier takes on there. It is the name of the Father that, inside the mother speech, introduces something which is beyond the maternal, which is the relationship to culture and the law.

This transcendent principle, on which rests the entire theoretical edifice of Lacanian psychoanalysis, is therefore very simply the phallus, and its privilege comes precisely from the fact that 'it is really lacking in the woman'.[172]

> **Phallic castration is no longer a threat for the woman (which it is for a boy) but a fact. From this lack comes security; for a girl, without endangering her sexuality, can identify herself with 'the woman who doesn't have it'. The 'threat' of phallic castration does not matter.**[173]

The woman is defined by her presence: while the father, always absent, has a role to play only at the symbolic level, the mother is there, in the real, attentively responding to the child's needs. But this presence of the mother is like that of an absence – absence of the penis: the woman is the biologically incomplete being who 'really' lacks a penis. Moreover, it is because she is really deprived that she lacks the dimension of absence, the distance with respect to reality on which is based the split of the phallus as an object and as a letter as well as the split of the father into a real father as well as a symbolic father.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Dolto, Psychanalyse et pediatrie, p. 105.

This transcendent principle, the cornerstone of the whole symbolic edifice, in the last analysis, can be brought back to the empirical observation that women 'really lack the penis'.

How is it that the penis is really lacking in woman without however the clitoris being really lacking in man? It is true that with respect to the penis, the clitoris has a 'real morphological inferiority [!!!]'.[174] But since when is the symbolic evaluated in centimeters?

At a conjuncture characterized by the rise of feminist demands, at a time when the respective roles assigned to men and women by patriarchal society have been violently questioned, [Lacanian psychoanalysis] has shifted the problem: it is shown that the real father does not count, his person is effaced behind the awesome symbolic Father, who becomes effective only when incarnated in the mother's speech.

Finally, Lacanian psychoanalysis presents itself as the last avatar of Western metaphysics. What, in Ms Dolto and Mannoni, paralyzes the faculty to resist phallocentrism to such an extent? What, in these women, resists resistance so violently that they end up as collaborators?

The Philosopher in Drag or the Feminine Without Women*

The Researcher will here analyze 'forms of contemporary anti-feminism' as they are seen, not in social practice, but in discourse, and more precisely, in philosophical discourse. The Researcher does, however, have some scruples about taking philosophical discourse as her main target: it seems to her that it deserves 'neither this excessive honour nor this indignity', for, even if one limits oneself to the orders of discourse in society, there are forms of anti-feminism that are more serious and of greater consequence than this one.

From Negation to Denegation[175]

What the Researcher has to say, can be made clearer with this hypothesis: while old forms of anti-feminism have not disappeared –those that were formulated with their face uncovered against a backdrop of solid misogyny – yet another form, more diffused and more complex, has replaced them.

Traditional discourse, philosophical and theological as well as literary, enhanced by that of science and shared by common sense, has long affirmed that women are inferior to men.[…]

The Feminine as a Metaphor of Being-in-the World

Philosophical thought has long stopped presenting truth as conformity between subject and object, as mastery of the object by the subject in the register of a dual logic (which feminist criticism too often unduly confounds as being 'the philosophy and which it then denounces as masculine).

This questioning, internal to philosophy, of what was then called logocentrism, is linked explicitly to the questioning of phallic domination in the term coined by Derrida: 'phallologocentrism'. Even though taken linguistically from women, the feminine, however,

174 Ibid., p. 115.

* This text is based on a paper presented during a colloquium on 'Forms of Contemporary Anti-feminism', held at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1991. The circumstantial title has been retained. It was published in Feminismes au present [Feminisms in the Present Tense], Futur anterieur: L'Harmattan, Paris, 1993, pp. 205-18.

175 Denegation or fore conclusion?

is not uniquely a qualification of women alone,[176] as defended by feminist thinkers called essentialists. The critique of identity, even as a process of identification, carries a critique of sexed identities. Woman and Man are not concepts but 'fetishes'.

Revealing the dimension of the feminine and its cortege of connotations (change, receptiveness, non-one, dissemination, etc.) leave outside its field the question of the effective relationships between men and women within the same world. It leaves it in the shade while seeming to broach it. By confronting this sexual dualism in favour of their undecidability, one hides rather than confronts it.

The Researcher is not questioning a conception of sexuality difference here, that challenges their dual categorization as essences or as clear-cut identities. When the feminine becomes valid, and truth becomes a woman, then the male philosopher declares himself to be feminine, that is, he adorns himself so to say with the feminine, by challenging the logic of contraries.

The Researcher will clarify this matter with only one example, taken from Derrida's commentary on Maurice Blanchot's text La Folie du jour.[177] In the disenchanted universe of Blanchot's narratives, the women characters always have a surprisingly affirmative force.[178] Thus, in La Folie du jour, Blanchot writes: 'I have, however, met people who never said "keep quiet" to life and never "go away" to death. These were almost always women, beautiful creatures. Men, they are terror struck....' In the face of this valorization of women, Derrida leans on the 'almost' of 'almost always women' to insert himself or to insert men among the women: 'it is therefore more than probable, in so far as I say yes, yes I may be a woman and beautiful. I am a woman and beautiful.... Genders interpenetrate.... "I" therefore retains the chance to be a woman or to change sex....'[179] One clearly sees here and almost in caricature, how, when woman becomes positive, the (male) thinker declares himself woman, takes on the feminine. The Researcher would vulgarly translate this phenomenon in the following way: If women are good, she is one of them. But this woman, who is a man, does not, for all that assume the avatars, generally linked to the effective condition of woman. At the stock exchange in Paris, Wall Street or Tokyo, the feminine of a woman is never worth as much as the feminine of a man, and the entire political question remains intact. If one were to practice the art of suspicion, one might even wonder if the valorization of the feminine, immediately exploited by men, is not a new 'ruse' - an unconscious one - an appropriating manouevre that thus adds to the acquired advantages of the masculine position, also those that could be affirmed on the side of women.

In fact, one observes that crossing the traditional borders of sex does not have the same connotations for some as for others: a man gains from it, a woman is diminished, as the always pejorative expression 'phallic' woman reveals. A woman-man has a less beautiful transexuality than a man-woman, and in any case does not labour the philosophical imaginary.

176 Even though he resorts to the term feminine, in particular with respect to Nietzsche, Derrida is quite conscious of the risk of re-territorialization involved in the use of this term. He would like to neutralize or universalize feminine metamorphors (hymen, imagination) just as has been done with masculine metaphors.

177 Maurice Blanchot, La Folie du jour [The Madness of the Day].

178 I had picked it up in 1976 in 'Du cote de Claudia or Madame Moffat balaiera tout ca', in Grammar 4, Lire Blanchot, pp. 88-103.

179 . J. Derrida, Parages, Galilee, Paris, 1986, pp. 279-80.

The bisexuality or rather the transexuailty (for bisexuality would still imply the existence of the two) of the thinker thus cumulates the advantages of both the sexes and avoids their inconveniences. This is why the Researcher has been able to talk of transvestites.

Undecidability and Duality

Thinkers who have tackled the feminine thematic, have done so in extremely different philosophical contexts, each of which deserves specific analysis, but which cannot be done here.[180] The reflection that replaces the effective positions of men and women by the confrontation of the logical and ontological categories of the masculine and feminine, irrespective of its commitments, therefore, avoids the asymmetry of sexuality groups that meet and confront each other in reality.

This anti- feminism, no longer resides in the misogynist affirmation of a woman's nature inferior to man's nature – even if this misogyny appears occasionally - but rather in displacing the problem of the man – woman relationship to the advantage of the somewhat abstract categorical relationships of the feminine and the masculine. In a certain way, the feminine instance as a mode of being in the world can do without women.

Difference and Differend

Whatever be the validity of genealogical links between deconstructionist thought and determined socio-cultural strategies, it remains nonetheless true that in the flattening out of differences, or in the substitution of difference[181] for the regime of oppositions, the effective differend (dispute) is eluded, and the relationships of domination are evaded in their speculative resolution.

If this dualism of the relationship between the sexes and the privileges granted to one of them – the masculine – over the other – the feminine – is unacceptable, this dualism cannot be transcended by simply denegating it. It must first insist on being named. [...] The question is to know if metaphysical presuppositions support all political thought. To support a non-metaphysical politics, that is to say, free from the definition of its aims and of its agents, is in the Researcher's opinion, the perilous state of feminism. [...] Isn't it an integral part of acknowledging differance to acknowledge the differend, a differend that goes beyond its political version, to which we have limited ourselves here? And isn't to misunderstand differend under another subtle guise, to re-establish the secular hegemony of the one?

Feminism Modernity, Post-modernism: For a Dialogue across the Ocean*

If, in its dominant versions, feminist reflection has historically shown a pathetic attachment to the project of modernity, this unfortunately one-sided passion is weakened when it does not purely and simply turn into its contrary. The crisis has attained such proportions that one often sees feminism being defined as 'a form of postmodern thought'.[182] This forgets

180 . Cf. 'Difference et differend' in M. Perrot and G. Duby, eds. Histoire des femmes. Plon, Paris, 1992.

181 [The term coined by Derrida to indicate a perpetual deferring/differing. (Eds)] It is not Derrida's personal commitment in the face of political situations that is in question here, but the difficulty of taking the political situation into account in thinking differance.

* This excerpted essay originally appeared in 'Feminismes au present [Feminisms in the Present Tense]. Futur anterieur: L'Harmattan, Paris, 1993, pp. 59-84.

182 Jane Flax, 'Postmodernism and Gender Relation in Feminist Theory', Signs Vol. 12, No. 4, 1987, p. 622.

that the thought of women's emancipation and sexual equality, in which feminism plunges its roots, has long constituted and even today remains one of these 'grand' narratives that all sorts of post-modern criticism take as their privileged target.

The Researcher would like to argue here that these new American post-modern approaches share a good number of the aporias with the theoretical traditional that they are supposed to combat. First, in generalizing from certain defended positions within the women's movement in France, this approach conceals or disqualifies the others, the majority in this case. Not, reducing 'French' feminism to certain theoretical positions is not only to hide major feminist struggles that have taken place outside or sometimes against these positions: it is also to obscure some of the most influential feminist theoretical positions in France.[183] It prevents any thinking about the conditions in which these multiple positions have emerged, their relation to the political practice of women, their social and academic acceptability or non-acceptability, or their subversive dynamic. From this point of view the Researcher is surprised at the lack of comments raised in American discussion of 'French feminism' by the transformation of the MLF (Women's Liberation Movement) into the registered trademark of one group.

Some Questions on the Meaning of 'Post'

One of the most relevant themes for feminist criticism– and the most shared by the multiple processes, known under the name of post-modernism or post-structuralism – is the critique of linear temporality, inherited from Enlightenment discourse and all the progressivist implications that have marked the political and philosophical thinking of Western modernity.

Lyotard himself has recognized this ambiguity, which is settling down around the concept he himself, helped to elaborate in The Post-modern Condition. In a later collection, which bears the symptomatic title Post-modernism Explained to Children and which is curiously much less quoted in feminist literature, he recognizes that the post-modern is undoubtedly a part of the modern.[184] Far from signifying a new step, the post-modern would in this case be 'everything that in the modern puts forward the unpresentable in the representation itself'. [185] It would include not only Proust but also already Montaigne! The 'post' thus have to be interpreted as a process of 'ana-mnesis' or of 'ana-morphosis' which reflects on an 'initial lapse'. This is the interpretation that seems to bring Lyotard closer to Adorno and Horkheimer of the Dialectic of Enlightenment,[186] to the extent that it aims to retain the living memory of the 'wounds' that prevent the 'tranquil perpetuation' of the modern project.

183 It is, to say the least, surprising, for example, that the work of important figures in French feminist theory, like Colette Guillaumin, Christine Delphy, Michele Le Doeuff, or Nicole-Claude Mathieu, to quote just a few women, is conspicuous by its absence in American references to French feminists.

184 Ibid., p. 115.

185 Ibid., p. 31.

186 Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, La Dialectique des Lumieres, Gallimard, Paris, 1974.

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Pronote

Language is part of the fabric of our everyday lives, and its interrelationship with gender has been at the center of feminist discussions for some time now. This chapter is penned within a predominantly sociolinguistic framework. It is broadly divided into two broad areas, Sexist Terminology and Women's Talk, concerned with how language users operate in a social context. Across both areas, 'dominance' models of explaining and evaluating language practice are seen as springboard from which subsequent questions and theories have been developed, with particular focus on the diversity and strength of female discourse, that gained momentum due to the injustice perpetrated against women. Also common to both subsections, is the issue of extending the debate towards more contextually sensitive analysis, away from earlier broad generalizations. To elucidate the difference and the question of the natural extended to be unnatural references of popular feminist writers are accounted for in which quotations from their work are fabricated to evaluate the difference between maleness and femaleness of writing ...

Diagrammatic representations given below will signify the importance of this chapter and the need for adopting deconstruction theory in relation to language...



Figure 1:- Conventional Model of a Text - Attempted Deconstruction

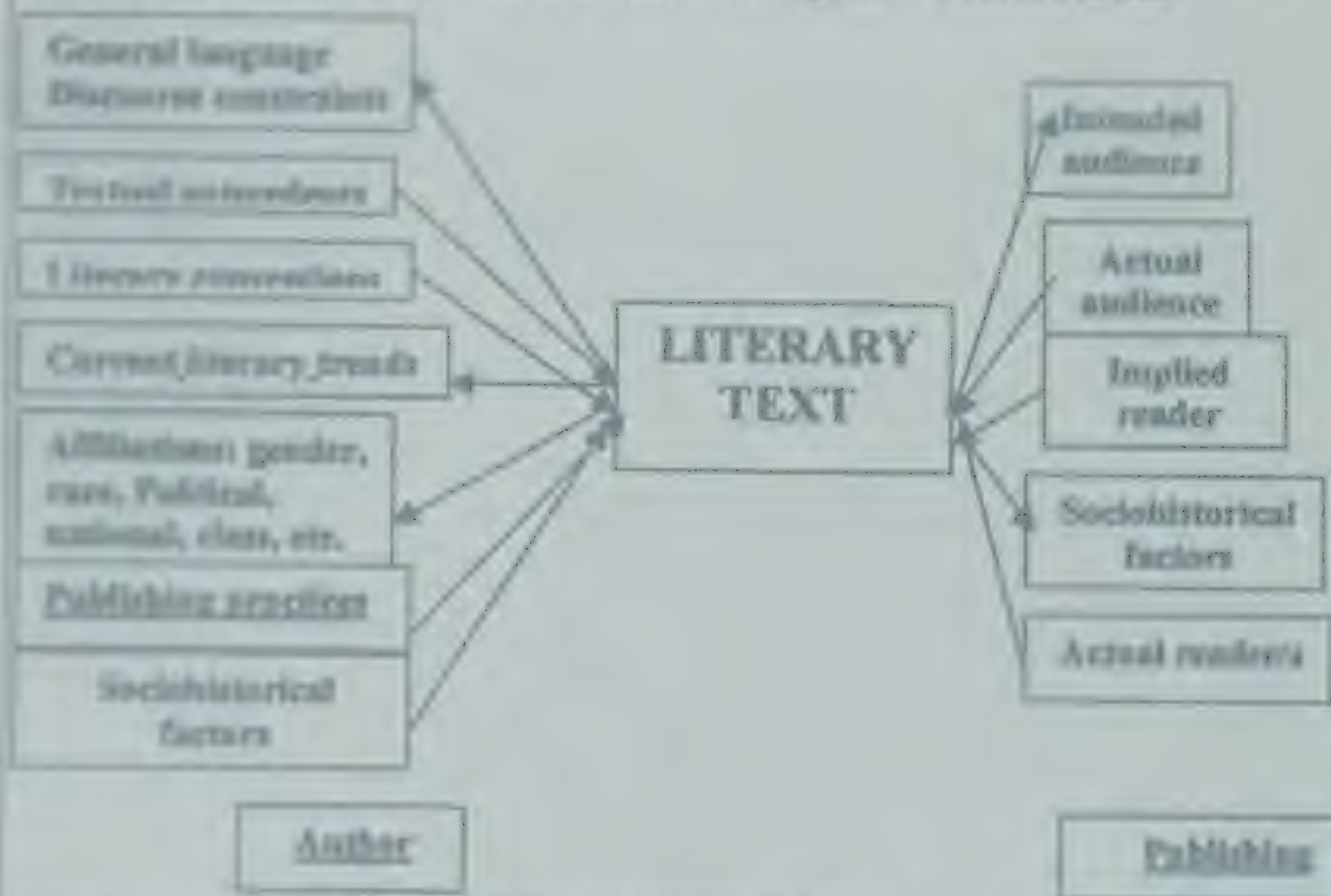


Figure:2 :- A Feminist Deconstructed Model of a Text

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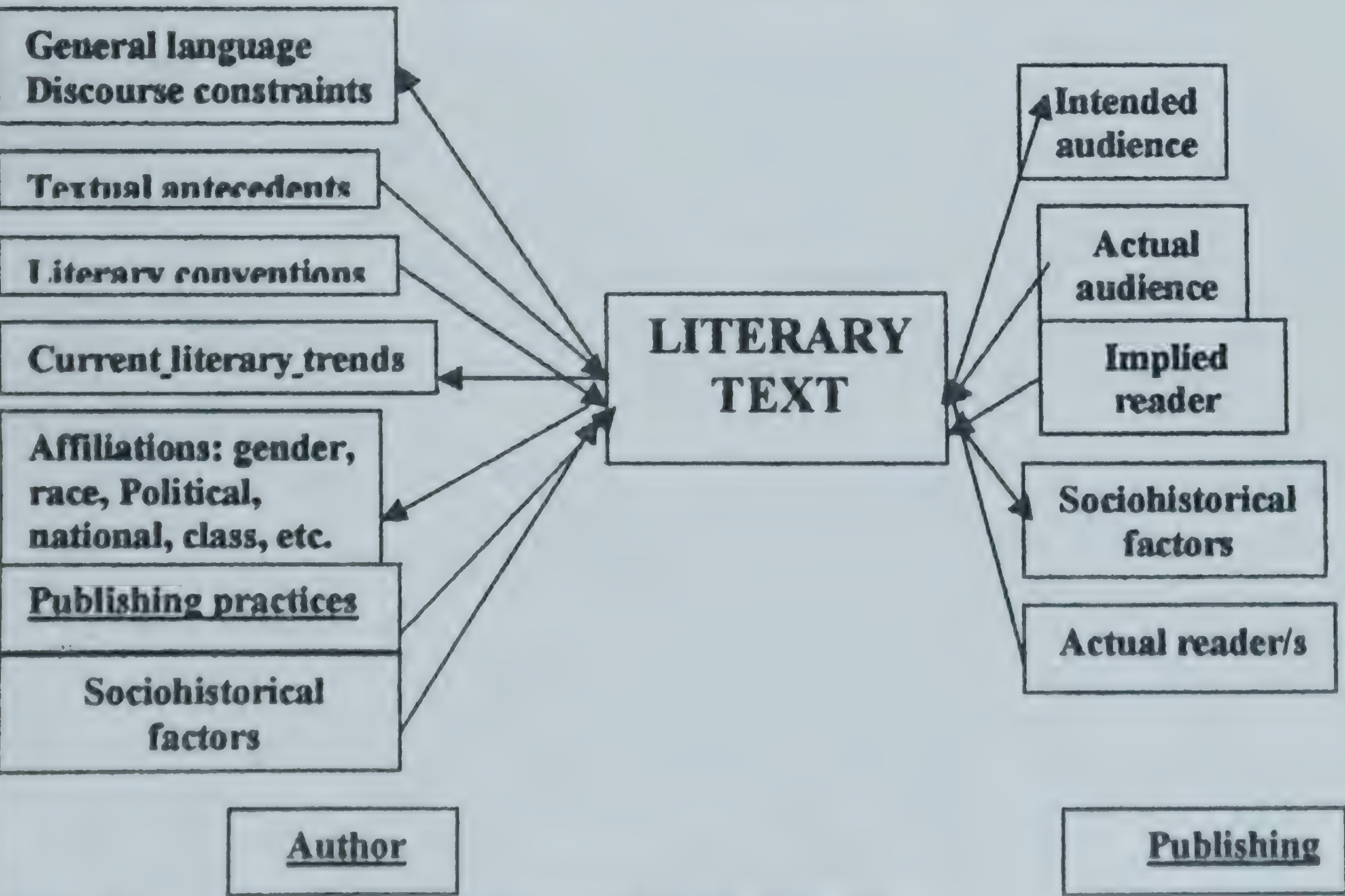


Figure:2 :-- A Feminist Deconstructed Model of a Text

Chapter-4

The Gender and Genre....!
[Why is Language of feminist Issue-Why Deconstruction?]

Feminism And Language

In its rewriting of academic research, feminism can be viewed as language, as Terry Threadgold does in Feminist Poetics (1997), when she traces the rewriting of **patriarchal** knowledges in Teresa de **Lauretis's** feminist work on semiosis. Coming from the mouths and pens of **Feminists,** all this arguing – being women's complaints about the patriarchal academy- has tended to construct them as scolds. It places them, as Meaghan Morris says in The Pirate's Fiancee (1988), in 'a speech genre all too familiar in daily life ... the woman's complaint or nagging. One of the defining generic rules of "nagging" is unsuccessful repetition of the same statements'.

One strand of such commentary has contributed to the developing interdisciplinary field of **language** and **gender**: feminism on language. As feminists began to search for existing scholarship on women, men and language, what little they found was highly **androcentric.** Linguistics has a long tradition of interest in language change, so that is what they encountered. However, the accounts of women's contribution to language shifts were little more than articulations of the writers' prejudices and reiterations of the Stereotypes from the period in which they were writing. A classic example is a chapter on 'The Woman' in Otto Jespersen's book Language: Its Nature and Development (1922), in which he states as a fact beyond doubt, that women's contribution to language is to maintain its 'purity' through 'their' instinctive shrinking from coarse and vulgar expressions' whereas men's contributions are vigour, imagination and creativity. He continues with more specific claims about differences in the language used by men and women, establishing the intelligence and importance of men and the empty headed foolishness of women. On the basis of such scholarly conjectures about language in the patriarchal academy, Jennifer Coates in Women, Men Language (1986) posited an androcentric rule: 'Men will be seen to behave linguistically in a way that fits the writer's view of what is desirable or admirable; women on the other hand will be blamed for any linguistic state or development which is regarded by the writer as negative or reprehensible.'

Feminist sociolinguists such as Deborah Cameron, Jennifer Coates and Margaret Deuchar, have critiqued social variationist studies, particularly social stratification studies based on social dialect data, taking sex as a sociolinguistic variable. These large-scale studies focused on aspects of pronunciation and grammar and identified an intriguing gender-differentiated pattern, namely that women consistently tend toward the prestige 'Standard' variety of a language more than men do. Feminist critics have pointed out flaws in both method and explanation. The phenomenon presented as in need of explanation, is women's greater use of Standard forms, rather than men's lesser use of them. In Women in their Speech Communities (1988), Deborah Cameron and Jennifer Coates have remarked on the implication here that male speech is the norm from which women deviate, since it is not clear why the behaviour of those using the Standard forms more often should be what needs accounting for. The explanation given is, in brief, that women are more status-conscious than men, a claim that has been widely criticized. Traditional family structure was assumed in assigning class categories, so that whole families took their social position from the fathers.

Chapter-4

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As a consequence, it is likely that some women were wrongly classified. The sociolinguistic interview was the same for all informants, regardless of sex or class. Other feminist sociolinguists, such as Lesley Milroy in Language and Social Networks (1980), and Jenny Cheshire in Variation in an English dialect (1982), conducted research, which approached the research question differently. These studies accounted for speech patterns in terms of solidarity and tightness of social network membership, thereby avoiding the 'social climbing' view built into the social stratification studies. However, the definition of social network on which it depends runs into similar problems of male bias. Feminists in search of scholarship on the language of women and men, then, repeatedly encountered the male-as norm and the androcentric rule in operation. Challengers of sexist language observed similar tendencies; the pseudo-generic usage of man, for instance, enshrines the male-as-norm, In her essay 'The Semantic Derogation of Women' (in Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley, eds., Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance, 1975), Muriel Schulz argues that terms marked as female in English are systematically downgraded, so that apparent pairs like master/mistress and bachelor/Spinster are not used symmetrically and do not carry the same connotations. In critiquing sexist language, feminists have politicized classifications that were previously considered to be neutral ones. A powerful counter-discourse has developed, recently identified by Deborah Cameron in Verbal Hygiene (1995) as 'anti-PC discourse'.

Robin Lakoff's Language and Women's Place (1975) was an influential early work on gender and language from a feminist perspective; it explores two avenues: **sexism** in the English language and women's language use. Ironically, early **Anglo-American** feminist scholarship on women's language and on gender differences worked with the same androcentic male-as-norm encountered in pre-feminist scholarship. Lakoff implicitly establishes men's language as a norm to which women's does not match up. She argues that the way women use particular language forms (e.g., hedges such as you know, sort of euphemisms) projects uncertainty, lack of confidence and weakness.

Subsequent research on gendered patterns of language use, moved away from the early tendency to focus on language forms to a new focus on language functions (influenced by the developing fields of **discourse** analysis and pragmatics). Language and gender researchers have drawn upon the methods and approaches of many disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, social psychology and sociology. One micro sociological analysis of power in interaction which is still frequently referred to is Pamela Fishman's study of three couples talking at home, 'Interaction: the Work Women Do' (in Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae and Nancy Henley, eds., Language, Gender and Society, 1983). The conversation tended to center around the men's interests: the women were working on them, asking frequent questions, using minimal responses supportively to develop the men's topics.

Other explorations of male dominance through language have addressed issues surrounding women's silence and the silencing of women, sometimes confusing the two (notably Dale **Spender** in Man Made Language, 1980). The silencing of women in positions of authority, by talking over them, is the subject of a range of studies; e.g., male patients interrupting women doctors, male employees interrupting women managers. Simultaneous speech can be far from disruptive, as shown by studies of high-involvement style (Deborah Tannen, Conversational Style, 1984) and of conversations among women (Jennifer Coates, Women Talk, 1996).

There is evidence of males talking more than females in a wide range of public contexts, including university seminars, school classrooms, managerial meetings, and television and Internet discussions. There is other evidence of women being more supportive than men. The idea that women and men have distinct interactional style has proved popular.

The notion of distinct male and female interactional style, most fully articulated by Deborah Tannen, is accompanied with an assumption of distinct subcultures into which men and women have been socialized. This two-cultures theory was first put forward by Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker in their 1982 essay, 'A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication', to account for miscommunication among adults.

Tannen has brought these alleged male and female interactional styles to a wide audience beyond the academy, in a series of books marketed as self-help: That's Not What I Meant! (1986); You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation (1991); and Talking From Nine to Five (1995). Feminist criticism of these popularizing books focuses attention on the problem of the two alleged styles and the cross-cultural miscommunication account. The two main problems are the suppression of power, which presents an illusion of men and women being' equal but different, and the reification of gender as difference. In neglecting power the approach loses contact with feminism; behaviour perceived as oppressive is reinterpreted in terms of neutral difference and 'innocent' misunderstanding. This depoliticisation, seriously undermines feminist discourse on language. Power issues are also lost in the two-cultures notion itself; a feminist perspective requires reasons for such sexual segregation. Gender is reified as **difference** when the agenda is set solely in terms of identifying male and female differences. Suppression of power issues and the confirmation of gender as difference permit the appropriation of feminist research on language for non-feminist purposes. Gender-differences work can be used to support accounts of men and women using very traditional sexual dichotomies (e.g., John Gray's Men are from Mars, Women Are from Venus).

For contemporary language and gender researchers, the challenge is how to conceptualize gender without such polarization. "Men do this, women do that", is not only overgeneralised and stereotypical, it fails utterly to address the question of where "men" and "women" come from' (Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Some Issues for the 90s', in Sara Mills, ed., Language and Gender, 1995). Feminist research on language and gender in the Anglo-American tradition over the past 25 years or so has been of value in stimulating political and social changes. In order to explore patterns of male dominance effectively, we need to do so by examining the institutions, situations and genres which establish men in positions where they can dominate women.

The main problem with the tradition of language and gender research, however, lies with the polarization of gender categories. None of the research in the 'difference and dominance' tradition begins to address how language, personal identity and social context interact or how that interaction sustains unequal gender relations. For feminist criticism with a poststructualist perspective, language is the site of the cultural production of gender identity. Gender is a process and verbal interaction (both speech and writing) is where it takes place.
Research on language and gender influenced by poststructualism examines, not gender difference, but construction of gender identities. Language and Masculinity, 1997), Deborah Cameron refers to **performance** theory in her examination of young Americans' enactment of heterosexual masculine identities. Cameron uses this performative gender work in a critique of the notion of distinct male and female interactional styles.

As academic feminists are beginning to theorize the fluidity of gender identities, it is perhaps ironic that it is the earliest feminist scholarship on language and gender, which has found its way into gender – bending subversions outside the academy. Lakoff herself has long moved on from her early speculations about distinct 'women's language'. However, they are now being used (selectively) in an instructional genre for conscious reconstruction of gender identity: in an advisory text for male-to-female **cross-dressers** (Laing 1989).

FEMINISM AND LITERATURE

It is difficult to express concisely, the enormous impact that feminism has had on academic literary studies. It is even more difficult to explain why it should be within English departments in particular in that **feminist** textual criticism, in a variety of forms, has found and retains some foothold, even in the **backlash** of the nineties. In Feminism and Its Fictions (1998), Lisa Maria Hogeland explains the phenomenon by seeing feminism 'as a kind of literacy, a way of reading both texts and everyday life from a particular stance', whilst Cora Kaplan, in Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism (1986), sees writing as part of a political process of resistance, arguing that 'defiance is a component of the act of writing for women'.

The field of English literature as taught within British universities was, until the 1980s, excessively dominated by male-authored works.

Women students and teachers working within the **patriarchal** institution of the university English department began integrating explicitly, feminist-oriented approaches to texts as part of the **second wave**, at the end of the 1960s in a few pioneering cases and, more widely into the 1970s and 80s. Because there were so few women-authored texts on the curriculum, the critical attention of these feminists focused on representations of women in male-authored works. This kin of criticism is now quite commonplace, and often takes the form of hunting out **stereotypes** of women and using them as a means of identifying the ways in which these restricted culture representations, underpin women's **oppression.** By representing women as sexual objects, for instance, rather than politically powerful subjects, women receive a version of **femininity** and womanhood that is perpetually limited and therefore limiting.

Many feminist critics argued that, in canonical texts, women were usually represented as part of a crude sexual binary: they were virgins or whores. Kate **Millett's** analysis of such negatively sexualized representations of women in texts by men in Sexual politics (1969) remains infamous for her attack on the **phallocentric** D. H. Lawrene, but has since been heavily criticized for its lack of sophistication. However, Germaine **Greer**'s The Female Eunuch, despite being first published in 1970, remains very pertinent to a nineties audience in its witty identification of stereotypes of women in a variety of cultural media. Greer here argues and makes an important point about the emphasis on women's passivity and their **objectification,** and feminist critics have continued this 'images of women' approach to male-authored, canonical texts. They have studied anything from Chaucer and Shakespeare right up to contemporary works, looking principally for victimized or stereotypically passive representations to criticize, or else searching for radical breaks from the mould to celebrate.

The excuses for not including women's writing on courses, outlined very clearly by Joanna **Russ** in How To Suppress Women's Writing (1984), included the idea that women did not write very much, and that what they did write was of dubious quality. Feminist critics argue that aesthetic standards for cultural production have been set by white, middle- **class,** heterosexual men in reference to work by white, middle-class, heterosexual writers. Showalter rejects the idea that the shared content of women's writing is anything to do with a stereotypical 'female sensibility', but links their writing instead to the material conditions of production: 'the female literary tradition comes from the still-evolving relationships between women writers and their society'. **Showalter argues that women's writing is like that of any other subculture, and that it goes through three phases of development: 'imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition', 'protest against these standards and values', and finally, 'self-discovery', 'a search for identity'.** In a later, equally influential work, The New Feminist Criticism (1986), Showalter argues this point further, in her call for the establishment of '**gynocritics**', 'a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories'.

The self-consciousness that is the legacy of two decades of feminist literary criticism has made British women's writing self-reflexive in a new way. Now, every book is written in the shadow of feminist theory as well as Jane Austen, and in the consciousness of such female themes, metaphors, and iconographies as the mother tongue, embroidery, cookery, **eating disorders**, sisterhood, madwomen in the attic, lesbian eroticism and mother-daughter attachment.

(The Guardian, Tuesday 11 May, 1999)

The critical view that women's writing can be considered as a subgenre of literature on its own terms, has not found universal support amongst all feminists working in the field, and work in the 'gynocritics' tradition has perhaps faced more protest from within the feminist rank than from without. One of the early and most successful counter-critiques can be found in Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics (1985), which was, and to some extent remains, an enormously influential text in what has become the established canon of feminist literary theory. Moi's now classic work provides and early narrative of feminist criticism, and was one of the first to articulate a clear binary divide between 'Anglo-American Feminist Criticism' and **French Feminist** Theory'. The continental schism, as well as the division between theory and criticism, has had a lasting effect on the view of feminist work in literary studies, playing off the supposedly pragmatic and coherent Anglo-American critics against the esoteric and inaccessible European theorists. With the mainstreaming of critical theory in general, feminist academics increasingly adopted assorted textual approaches in their writing, with feminism developing very strong affinities with particular theories, notably **psychoanalysis** and deconstruction. Sexual/Textual Politics, published originally by Methuen in its New Accents series, provides one of the most compact introductions to the two main strands of feminist literary criticism and theory even now, and effectively made feminism teachable by providing something that could easily become a set text on a specialist English course.

One of Moi's main criticism of the kind of Anglo-American feminism, represented by Showalter is that ultimately it does not radically challenge bourgeois, humanist critical practices: it merely replaces a male-dominated canon of classics with a female-dominated one. Anglo-American feminist criticism has waged war on this self-sufficient canonization of middle-class male values.

The fact that these authors are women, under Anglo-American feminism, does not, for Moi, make a great deal of difference. Whereas Showalter sees women's writing as taking its place under traditionally formulated aesthetic categories, **Cora Kaplan argues in See Changes: Culture and Feminism** that women's marginalized status under patriarchal humanism necessarily makes them less subject to its ideological sway, and therefore places their writing outside the canonical embrace:

> At both the psychic and the social level, always intertwined, women's subordinate place within culture makes them less able to embrace or be held by romantic individualism with all its pleasures and dangers.

The work of articulating this marginalized position, and, in some cases, of celebrating it, has largely fallen to those that Moi labels the 'French Feminists'. The names most clearly associated with this term remain Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, although in Language and Sexual Difference: Feminist Writing in France (1991), Susan Sellars gives details of the work of many more theorists who could be included.

Ecriture feminine- 'feminine writing', or 'writing the body' as it has been variously termed- is the practice associated with French feminism and a discourse concerned with **subjectivity**, sexuality and **language.** By and large, femininity is associated with women and

deemed to be an ideological structure that governs femaleness rather than maleness, but this is a matter of cultural convention rather than biological necessity.

Helene Cixous argues that there is a patriarchal hierarchy that orders language into positively-and negatively changed binary terms, ones that always favour the **masculine** dimension. Her list of binary oppositions, includes activity/passivity, father/mother, head/heart, and culture/nature (Cixous and Clement 1986:115). The arbitrary link between women and femininity established by ecriture feminine has the effect of shifting feminist debate from the focus on women as a coherent, biological mass with common concerns that inform their writing, and refocuses attention on the effects of femininity in writing itself (regardless of the **gender** of the author). Thus, for Cixous, both men and women can create ecriture feminine.

Irigaray exploits the negative position cast for women to her own advantage. The exclusion of women is interpreted as politicized resistance. The lack of single sexual organ is replaced, in Irigaray's understanding, by a multiple and fluid sexuality which takes in labia, vagina, breasts and mouth.

At the heart of both 'Anglo-American' criticism and 'French feminist' theory is the issue of adequate representation for women and femininity, whether that be within a patriarchal structure or within a new kind of structure formed entirely outside the existing ones. But what has not been addressed until this point is the differences between women. The blanket assumption that all women share in their oppression, was one that was made too easily by middle-class, white academics, who followed the models of exclusion, provided for them by traditional, male-dominated practices. Throughout the years of feminist development, the voices of working – **class** women, disabled women, women of colour, lesbians and bisexual women have been less prominent that those of their white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied counterparts. These differences within feminism, especially when systematically ignored, threatened to pull the movement apart, particularly as the women's movement began to gain recognition.

In Finger-Licking Good: The ins and outs of Lesbian Sex (1996), Tamsin Wilton argues, that feminism has often had a detrimental effect on lesbian sexual and political identities. In the 1970s, it was possible for many straight feminists to embrace 'political lesbianism', an attitude that rejected masculinity and male-oriented heterosexuality, but had nothing to do with women's sexual relationships with other women.

Whilst critics generally agree that lesbian writing may not necessarily have to include an explicit sexual relationship between women, they have also been conscious of the need to develop some criteria that constitute the subgenre, for fear that any woman-centred text could be labelled lesbian, and subsumed under the 'women's writing' category in an undifferentiated way.

Is a lesbian aesthetic applicable to all texts, including texts by men, for instance? Just as feminist criticism began with an examination of women in fiction by men, and lesbian criticism concerned itself with representations of queer characters in texts from history, so black feminist literary criticism has been concerned with representations of black women characters in canonical works. In similar ways too, black critics have also been concerned with establishing counter-canons, and black women's writing has grown in representation on literature courses, both in the form of specialist options and as part of core literature modules.

The work of feminist critics on issues of cultural identity has been both in terms of reading work by white writers and of developing appropriate aesthetic judgements for black writing. It has also included producing a critique of black male commentators who have systematically ignored the different position that black women occupy under white, patriarchal dominance. Jane Miller, for instance, argues in Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture

(1990) that black feminists have been criticized for detracting from anti-racist arguments, when they insist that women must be taken into account as well as, and as distinct from, men in critiques of imperialism, colonization and **racism.** (Sarah Harasym, ed., The Post-Colonial Critic, 1990), and hooks argues that 'much that is potentially radical is undermined, turned into commodity, fashionable speech as in "black women writers are in right now"' (Talking Back: Thinking Feminist – Thinking Black 1989).

At the end of the twentieth century, it might be possible to join with Showalter in her confident assumption that the time for separate women's literature and criticism courses is over. She insists that feminist reading practices have transformed approaches to all literature, and that the integration of their voices is complete. It seems that feminist literary criticism might not have transformed as much as it needs to do just yet.

FEMINISM AND THE BODY

The work of Julia **Kristeva**, for example, is crucially concerned with analyzing the materiality of the female body; its drives, pulsations and emanations, which she argues, are regarded with revulsion within a culture which wishes to divorce the 'pure' subject of Cartesian rationalism from its fleshy corporeality. On a purely materialistic level, too, feminism is crucially concerned with the way in which women's bodies are controlled within a **patriarchal** system, which regulates women's access to such services as **contraception** and **abortion**, while at the same time idealized forms of their bodies are **objectified,** by various means, for male consumption and sexual delectation.

Artists and theorists informed by feminism do not reject the traditional alignment between women and body. Instead, they give it a subversive twist by playing on the concept of idealized femininity in such a way as to embrace the Kristevan notion of the female body as unruly, **grotesque**, and resistant to categorization.

OBJECTIFICATION AND PROTEST

Challenging the dominant ideological representations of femininity was a cornerstone of **second wave** feminist theory. One of the major issues of the second wave feminist movement of the 1970s was how women were represented negatively as **stereotypes,** and objects of the male **gaze** in the visual conventions of both high art and popular **culture**.

The key symbolic gestures that are most remembered, attacked visible symbols of the beauty industry or oppressive forms of objectification. The resulting exhibition, Images of Men, held there in 1980, was a major feminist grassroots intervention into high culture. **The continuing importance of this ideological struggle over representation, lies in the powerful relationship between idealized or denigrating images of women in the media and the internalization of these by female consumers, beautifully analyzed in the forthcoming chapter by the Researcher.**

THE IDEAL BODY

The ideal body of the 1990s is the winnowy, youthful body of the sylph, personified by the model Kate Moss. The materialism and power dressing of the affluent, glossy, competitive eighties were discarded in the eco-friendly 'purity' of the early nineties. Writing in 1990, Naomi **Wolf** argued in The Beauty Myth that 'the more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us'.

One of the most enduring idealizations of the female body, is the high art cultural form of the painted or sculpted nude.

HIGH ART CONVERNTIONS OF NUDE

Henry Moore's Memorial Figure of 1945-6, which stands in the grounds of Dartington Hall, was sculpted as a 'memorial to a friend who loved the quiet mellowness of this

Devonshire landscape' (Philip James, ed., Henry Moore on Sculpture, 1996). It stands in a long line of reclining nudes, which use the female body to express ideas about harmony, order and civilization. Moore monumentalizes the female body – in this case, the maternal body – to express the classic unity of woman and **nature.** He wishes to convey 'a sense of permanent tranquility, from which the stir and fret of human ways had been withdrawn'. This ideal of peace and timelessness, was particularly poignant in the aftermath of the Second World War.

In Clark 's account, the female body is ordered and perfected into an idealized form, which stands as a symbol of objectified female beauty. In this discourse of perfection, there is no hint of power politics, irregularity or individuality to disturb the gaze.

Protest against this idealization and objectification of the female body in its most conspicuous and long-lived form, the Old Master painting tradition of the nude, is not new to feminism. This clash between 'patriarchal' and 'feminist' perspectives on the objectification of the female body continues. In 1989, the authority of this Old Master tradition of the nude was called upon by right-wing MPs to justify the Sun's topless Page 3 girls, under attack from Clare Short's anti-**pornography** campaign. Norman Tebbit defended Page 3 girls as the working-**class** version of naked women in art galleries.

OBJECTIFICATION AND POSSESSION

It was John Berger in - Ways of seeing, who initiated a different political discussion of the nude by contrasting the power relations implicit in the representation of men and women. A man's presence was promise of power, whereas a woman's presence implied self-conscious display, her sense of self, split between the surveyor and the surveyed. 'Men act and women appear. Women watch themselves being looked at.' In both forms, the idealized and objectified bodies of women had an important role to play. In 1865, Berger argues, 'the ideal was broken' by the 'realism' of Manet's contemporary nude, Olympia, who in her assertive pose and returning gaze, appears to be questioning her passive role as object of the gaze.

THE GAZE

Theories about the objectification of the female body have become highly developed in the wake of Laura **Mulvey**'s seminal essay 'Visual **pleasure** and Narrative Cinema' (1975), which analyzed the representation of female stars such as Marlene Dietrich in terms of their objectification by the male gaze within Hollywood narrative cinema. Drawing on **psychoanalytic** and structuralist theory, Mulvey argues that the cinematic pleasures of seeing were primarily a male fantasy. The voyeuristic pleasures of cinematic fantasy, constructed women characters and female stars, as fetishised objects of a 'masculine' gaze irrespective of the spectator's gender.

RECLAIMING THE FEMALE BODY

For feminist artists of the 1970s, who were active in the making of images, one of the key issues was recuperating the representation of the female body from objectification and **stereotyping**. In an article published in Art History in 1978, 'The Body Politic', Lisa Tickner proposed that the 'occupied territory' of the female body must be 'reclaimed from masculine fantasy and reintegrated in opposition to its more familiar role as raw material for the men'. Strategies adopted by contemporary women artists to achieve these aims were described by Tickner, as role reversal; performance and body art that questioned female identities; parody; and virginal iconography.

It was necessary to expose the workings of ideology by analyzing the production and consumption of representations of women, as well as analyzing the social conditions that produced them.

In Cultural Sniping (1985), Spence uses feminist, Marxist and **psychoanalytic** theory to deconstruct dominant myths about class, race and sexuality.

ORDERING THE FEMALE BODY

Lynda Nead's analysis of The Female Nude of 1992 reflects the sophistication and theoretical complexity of the debates about representation and the gaze that dominated the eighties, and reflected the psychoanalytic writings of **Lacan** and his followers, and the deconstruction theories of **Derrida**. Douglas perceived a fundamental dichotomy between 'order = purity' and 'disorder = pollution' in the social structuring of different societies. Male elites used this dichotomy to reinforce their power over women, by transcribing this value system symbolically onto the female body, expressing anxiety around signs of difference such as menstruation and childbirth. Lynda Nead uses the theories of Douglas and Kristeva to throw light on the representation of the female body in the high art nude. The nude is conceived of as a sealed container, a perfected, rationally organised formulation of the female body, not subject to individuality or change. The abject aspects of the female body are hidden and denied.

In attempting to speak of the lived body of experience, women artists inevitably begin to transgress the confinement of the idealized body which exercises a visual tyranny everywhere, from the pages of **women's magazines**, from commercial breaks on television or from advertising hoardings on the way to work. Chadwick was one of the first women artists to work with abjection and to recognize its power to disrupt categories, and to question the dominant formations of ideology by threatening the integrity of subjecthood with the transgressive power of the abject.

THE GROTESQUE BODY

When the French philosopher Luce **Irigaray** seeks a new symbol for the female body that resists patriarchal definition, she chooses 'volume fluidity', the open container, and the volume without contours, as opposed to the controllable closed volume of the female and maternal body of masculine fantasy.

The visceral fluid and boundless body of the witch has much in common with the grotesque, carnivalesque body which has always existed in popular culture as a corrective to the contained and idealized body of high culture. In The Unruly woman (1995), Kathleen Rowe argues that the ribald excess of the 'unruly' woman of **comedy,** personified in characters such as Roseanne and Dawn French can be used 'affirmatively, to destabilize the idealization of female beauty', and to return the male gaze by 'exposing and making a spectacle of the gazer'. For Rowe, the visual power and spectacle of the unruly woman is an alternative to 'feminist film theory's obsession with Lacanian-based psychoanalysis which takes as given women's identification with loss'. Also writing in 1995, Mary Russo, in The Female Grotesque, contrasts the classical body and the grotesque body as two sides of the same coin:

Rosemary Betterton, in an Intimate Distance (1996), draws together a number of examples of the use of abjection in the work by women artists about the female body in the nineties.

THE POSTMODERN BODY

In her sociological study of **dance**, Gabriele Klein identifies a pattern in European history, whereby periods of Korper-entfesselung (liberation of the body) alternate with korperdisziplin (restriction of the body). For Elizabeth **Wilson** in Adorned in Dreams (1995), fashion oscillates between the two poles of the 'natural' and the 'artificial'. The 'naturalism' of the hippie fashion of the seventies is shaped by and ideology of 'authenticity'. Just as you can rearrange identity in the shifting signifiers of postmodern fashion codes so increasingly you can rearrange the body as well.

Some feminist critics express reservations about postmodern theory, particularly its view of the dissolution of the unified subject, and with it in some cases the binarism of gender, appearing to leave feminism without a project. Seeking to deconstruct gender binarism and 'heteroreality', Judith **Butler** views all gender positions as forms of performance. Della Grace's The Three Disgraces parodies the Old Master tradition of idealized femininity in the paintings of Botticelli and Raphael.

The performance artist **Orlan**'s interventions in cosmetic surgery, might be viewed as the ultimate form of postmodern gender performance, in which she alters her identity via the fabric or her body.

As we have seen, the field of representation of the female body as 'contemplated object' is a complex and deeply political issue. The feminist critique has evolved over the last thirty years as a counterweight to the constant process of objectification and idealization generated by industry and the media, which through processes of internalization has become the cultural censor within.

FEMINISM AND GENDER

Can men theorise feminism can whites theorise racism, can the bourgeois theorise revolution, and son on. It is only when the former groups theorise that the situation is politically intolerable. Therefore it is crucial that the members of these groups are kept vigilant about their assigned subject positions.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World', In Other Words: Essays in Cultural Politics (1987)

Contemporary feminism has employed deconstructive strategies in order to destabilize a binary model inscribed in the masculine/feminine dyad. Instead, **Feminists** have provocatively elaborated new frameworks in which to locate the gendered and sexual subject. These theorists have drawn from the **Derridean** model, which argues that binary structures will always privilege one of the binaries over the other: for example, male over female.
Butler introduces the idea that all **gender** and all sexual identities are performed, while Sedgwick offers us a range of new modes of classifying gender and sexuality. Haraway responds to **postmodern** technological developments by configuring the contemporary subject as a **cyborg,** who is not locked into organic gender identification. So if we are to accept the idea that the dualism between the masculine and feminine is no longer the reigning discourse in the construction of gender, it would seem that, regardless of their gender, both men and women can and should stay vigilant and participate in developing new ways of configuring the contemporary subject.

Emancipatory feminist theory took shape in the 1960s with the development of **women's studies,** where the questioning of gender assigned subject positions began to be thoroughly investigated by exploring all aspects of gendered identities. Concomitantly, men's studies (or **masculinity studies**) emerged as a body of theory, which began to consider masculine **identity** and sexuality. Although men's studies became established as an area of study in its own right by the 1980s, it did not develop as substantially as women's studies. However, like women's studies, men's studies encompass a range of **ideological** position, which have taken identity as, variously a biological, cultural, social and/or psychic construct. Feminism has been configured as an ideological category that promotes gender equality and **emancipation.** Although feminist concerns may be the province of both genders, historically women participated and invested in its discourses more prolifically than men. The issue of how men should participate in feminist discourses, has been a contentious one. The key concern is that men will appropriate feminist **discourse** and paradoxically inscribe it with the same **phallocentric** strategies feminism has sought to challenge.

Masculine sexuality became a key issue in gender studies in the 1980s, when feminism began to be theorized in **phychoanalytic** terms. Mulvey argued that sexual difference controls how we view a film where the male subject lives out his fantasies and obsessions. The male gaze is constructed according to structures of control inscribed by sadistic voyeurism and/or fetishistic scopophilia (looking as a source of **pleasure**). Mulvey's essay was important because it offered an analytical framework revealing the symbolic relations of power in patriarchal representation. Psychoanalysis provided a clear methodology to analyze the unconscious of patriarchal language. The former is social and inscribed in language, and the latter is psychoanalytic. Mulvey draws in Freud to resolve the dilemma of the female spectator's subject positioning. Therefore she proposes that if cinematic representation is seen as the nise-en-scene of desire, and the site of **fantasy,** it may offer the female spectator multiple subject positions, both male and female.

Mulvey's essays gave fresh impetus to the debate bout the male gaze and voyeurism, masculinity, power and subordination. For example: how is the male body eroticised and presented as a voyeuristic fantasy for the female or the homoerotic gaze? How does male masochism operate? In order to tackle these issues, writers turned to feminist theory. The cultural theorist Stephen Heath believes that 'Men have necessary relationship to feminism - the point after all is that it should change them too' (Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., Men in Feminism, 1987). In 1988 Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford argued that in the light of feminist theory, it was time to address issues concerning masculinity.

Chapman and Rutherford highlight a paradox in contemporary thinking. On the one hand, feminists were drawing form the writing of male psychoanalytic and deconstructive theorists to challenge phallocentric configurations of gender identification and politics. On the other, male theorists were turning to feminist theorists to reconfigure patriarchal discourses on gender and identity. This called into question the approach that feminist theory and masculinity theory are categorized as different bodies of thought, based on different ideological agendas. The notion of **essentialism** became a significant issue in this debate: that is, that gender is biologically determined, and therefore that men and women are fundamentally different.

One adjectival derivation –feminine/masculine –is used to refer to social, cultural or psychic constructions. The other –female/male –represents the biological aspects of gendered identities. Broadly, essentialist gender positioning is taken to imply that the identities of men and women are biologically fixed and determined.

When Spivak demands that men should be vigilant when theorizing feminism, she also recognizes that women stay vigilant. Women would find it intolerable if men were always to speak on their behalf. However, Spivak questions the assumption that a woman's identity means that she speaks for women from a position of 'knowledge'.

The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on, cannot be held as a theoretical presupposition either, for it predicates that possibility of knowledge on identity.

Spivak argues that feminism has set itself up as a unitary body for political reasons; but she believes that women remain different. Equally, men should not be grouped under an umbrella term that fails to recognize the difference between men. Therefore, although an ontological construction of the gendered subject has been claimed for political reasons, the assumption of

an essential identity consigns subjectivity to biological reductionism. This does not allow for non-binary difference. The notion of 'identity' is bound up in essentialist assumptions about the gendered subject, while 'irreducible difference' suggests that gender positioning can be inscribed in anti-essentialist configurations of gender.

While men are invited to keep vigilant by not making a hegemonic claim to speak on behalf of women, Spivak also says that women must not assume the right to speak on behalf of other women, on the grounds of a shared or common identity. Following her logic, this means that men cannot claim to know and therefore speak for men. In short, although men should be vigilant about speaking on behalf of women, both men and women should be vigilant not to assume to necessarily 'know' or speak on behalf of any group which claims shared gender identity.

Spivak proposes the Derridian idea, that western philosophical discourse has constructed woman as a product of linguistic difference, according to a model of binary oppositionality. Spivak circumscribes essentialist gender politics by establishing a dialectical understanding of identity, where the subject is constructed through gender identification and **desire**.

Even though the male subject possesses the penis, he does not have access to the phallus. Anti-essentialist gender theorists have taken up the position that gender does not express an inner essence about the subject. Riviere pioneered the idea, that gender is constructed according to social codes, where a process of mimesis genders the subject.

Butler says that gender repetition may indeed reinforce conservative culture.

Butler's notion of performative identification functions in the same way, by either being employed to establish a normative notion of gender and sexuality as compulsory, or as a way of revealing its fictitious nature.

In this way, gender is not represented as 'real', but as a boundary, which is politically regulated. Sex is seen as an obligatory injunction for the body to become a cultural sign, and it has to repeatedly define itself as such. Therefore, she argues that sex becomes a 'corporeal project', a sustained performative act. The notion of an authentic' essential masculinity or femininity is replaced by the notion that all gender/sexual configurations are performed, constructed by a recycling of gendered signs of sexuality and desire. There is no essential masculine subject, just as there is no essential feminine subject. For Butler, the subject can either opt for mimetic subject-positioning which sustains the notion of credible gender identification, or 'camp it up', and so perform gender as excess in order to reveal gender identification as masquerade. Therefore, both genders can take up masculine or feminine subject positioning.

Notions of gender and sexuality were reconfigured with the emergence of queer studies in the 1990s. Following from the discourses raised by anti-essentialist femininsm, **queer theory** put to question all reigning schemes of gendered/sexual normativity. Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has proposed some radical configurations of gender/sexual mapping which destabilize the foundational narratives of sexual and gendered identities, and has established some exciting new ways in which subject positioning may be reformulated.

In 'Epistemology of the Closet' (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick draws on Michel **Foucault**'s claim that homosexuality began circa 1870. Obviously, this does not mean that same-sex sex did not occur before this date. Kosofsky Sedgwick has deconstructed sexual and gender categories by referring to 'allo-and autoidentification', where same-sex sex and different-sex sex involve both kinds of identification.

In the seemingly obvious section entitled 'People are Different form Each Other', Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued that, though we have elaborated a range of crude categories to contain identity, such as gender, race, **class**, nationality and sexual orientation, even if a subject were to share all of these categories with another, the differences may still remain significant. Included below is a sample of some of her ideas on sexual configurations:

- Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people.
- Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little.
- Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none.
- Some people, homo-, hetero- and bisexual, experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials, others of the reflected categorical sexuality do not.

Kosofsky Sedgwick goes on to unpack the categories of sex, gender and sexuality. She describes the former as 'chromosomal sex – the raw material', which is immutable and biologically based. On the other hand, she argues that gender is inscribed in a binary structure that shapes and informs a range of dual systems. This has little or nothing to do with 'chromosomal sex'.

According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, gender and power relations shape gender. The binary framework of masculinity and femininity determines gender. So while affiliations between different groups cannot be assumed because of common experience such as oppression, Kosofsky Sedgwick also argues that feminist anti-essentialist deconstructive strategies have meant that we should not be restricted to only same sex/gender identification. We have therefore found 'ways to ask the question of gender about texts even where the culturally "marked" gender (female) is not present as either author or thematic'.

This has offered women an interesting way of inscribing Kosofsky Sedgwick's idea of the female mark on a male-identified thematic. Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (in Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature, 1991), stands as a cult classic in feminist theory. Marxism does not recognize the subject in terms of cultural difference as articulated in feminist and anti-colonial theories.

Like Spivak, Haraway argues that there is nothing that encompasses all women, or men, under one unifying banner. Feminism has assumed that being female unities all women without taking into account differences between women, such as racial and class differences. By universalizing sexual difference, all other cultural differences are erased. Haraway destabilizes a binary notion of femininity or masculinity, by stating that there is no such thing as 'being' female or male. Gender categories are in fact highly complex notions, constructed by scientific discourses and other social practices, which are now being challenged.

The **cyborg** has emerged as a postmodern metaphor for the contemporary subject. The cyborg is for Haraway the 'illegitimate child of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism'. Haraway's cyborg colonises and negates the organic subject. In Haraway's cyberculture, masculinity is circulated as sign, where both mechanic and organic configurations of the subject are given equal status;

The years spanning 1975-91, produced some of the most interesting theories on sexual identity. **Anglo-American** feminist theory has been the focus of this paper, although this clearly does not encompass feminist thinking over this period. However the theorists mentioned above trace a trajectory of contemporary thinking, which situates masculinity in relation to feminist theory. Mulvey's notion of trans-sex identification, Spivak's postcolonial deconstruction of the gendered subject, Butler's performative identification, Kosofsky Sedgwick's allo and auto-identification, and Haraway's cyborg are all examples of how feminist theorists have explored ways in which sexual difference constructs identity in relation to both genders.

Language and Gender

Poetry is a privileged metalanguage in western patriarchal culture. Although other written forms of high culture – theology, philosophy, political theory, drama prose fiction –are also, in part, language about language, in poetry this introverted or doubled relation is thrust at us as the very reason-for-being of the genre. This phase of the chapter examines women's poetry as part of an investigation of women's use of high language, that is, the language, public, political and literary, of patriarchal societies.

A study of women's writing will not get us any closer to an enclosed critical practice, a 'feminist literary criticism'. There can in one sense be no feminist literary criticism, for any new theoretical approach to literature that uses gender difference as an important category involves a profoundly altered view of the relation of both sexes to language, speech writing and culture. For this reason the Researcher has titled her this phase of her chapter as **Language and Gender** rather than Women and Poetry, although it grew out of work on a critical anthology of English and American women's poetry that was introduced and edited a few years ago.[187] Some of the problems raised there, still seem central to the Researcher – the insertion of female centred subject matter into a male literary tradition, the attendant, problems of expressing this matter in a formal symbolic language, the contradictions between the romantic notion of the poet as the transcendent speaker of a unified culture and the dependent and oppressed place of women within that culture. The difficulty women have in writing, seems to her to be linked very closely to the rupture between childhood and adolescence, when, in western societies (and in other cultures as well) public speech is a male privilege and women's speech restricted by custom in mixed sex gatherings or, if permitted, still characterized by its private nature, an extension of the trivial domestic discourse of women. The prejudice seems persistent and irrational, unless we acknowledge that control of high language is a crucial part of the power of dominant groups, and understands that the

187 Cora Kaplan, Salt and Bitter and Good: Three Centuries of English and American Women Poets, London and New York 1975.

refusal of access to public language is one of the major forms of the oppression of women within a social class as well as in trans-class situations.

A very high proportion of women's poems are about the right to speak and write. The decision to storm the walls and occupy the forbidden place is a recognition of the value and importance of high language, and often contradicts and undercuts a more radical critique in women's poetry of the values embedded in formal symbolic language itself. To be a woman and a poet presents many women poets with such a profound split between their social, sexual identity (their 'human' identity) and their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometimes overt, often hidden or displaced, of much women's poetry.

The first part of the Researcher' chapter will try out a theoretical account of the process by which women come to internalize the suppression and restriction of their speech. The second part will demonstrate how the struggle to overcome the taboo is presented as the hidden subject in poems that seem deliberately difficult and opaque.

Do men and women in patriarchal societies have different relationships to the language they speak and write? Often buried in that larger subject, the exploration and definition of gender difference in culture, it becomes a distinct issue when women speak or write, and men protest, not only or primarily at what they say, but at the act itself. Recently left feminists have used work on ideology by the French political philosopher, Louis Althusser, together with the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and his modern French interpreter, Jacques Lacan, to clarify their understanding of the construction of femininity.[188] Contemporary work on ideology in France accepts Freud's theory of the unconscious and is concerned, among other things, with the construction of the subject in culture. Language is the most important of all the forms of human communication. Through the acquisition of language we become human and social beings: the words we speak situate us in our gender and our class. Through language we come to 'know' who we are. In elaborating and extending Freud's work, Lacan emphasizes the crucial importance of language as the signifying practice in and through which the subject is made into a social being. Social entry into patriarchal culture is made in language, through speech.

The account that follows here is necessarily very schematized, designed simply to show the crucial nexus between the acquisition of subjectivity through language and the recognition of the social nature of female identity.[189]

In language, the child acquires the necessary abstractions to situate himself in relation to others, and to speak the particular meanings of his own experience in a public, socially understood discourse.'

For Lacan, language or competent speech, is the Symbolic order. Lacan uses and transforms the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, who makes the basic distinction between language and speech. Saussure also suggests that meanings, words, can only be understood as differences from other meanings. It will become clear quite soon how the

188 Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Appartatus'. and 'Freud and Lacan' in Lenin, and Philosophy and OtherEssays, London 1971, Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A selection, London 1977, Jacques Lacan The Four Fundamentals of Psycho-Analysis, London 1977. See also Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne, Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., London 1982.

189 Useful introductory syntheses of the Lacanian account of the construction of the subject in language are Chris Weedon, Andrew Tolson, Frank Mort 'Theories of Language and Subjectivity' in Culture, Media, Language, Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, eds. London 1980 and Terry Eagleton, 'Psychoanalysis' in Literary Theory, London 1984. The substantial introductions by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose to Feminine Sexuality situate the work of Freud and Lacan in relation to femininity.

distinction between language and speech, the definition of meanings as relation of difference and the crucial role of language in the development of the child's consciousness of self, relates to women's use of language.

Symbolic language, which includes everyday speech as well as written or imaginative forms, uses two basic tropes, metaphor and metonymy. How men and women come to speak at all, how they see each other through speech, the social taboo on speech for children and women, all these relations bear upon the way in which individual writers are seen to 'create' new symbolic identifications and relations.

If the subject cannot be located in linguistic abstraction, then in extreme cases, as observed in the broad disorder termed schizophrenia, words cannot be constructed in an individual discourse. The difference between male and female entry into the Symbolic has to do with the stage of development which overlaps the full acquisition of language, and through which the child accepts his or her gender identity – the Oedipal phase. In order for women to identify finally with their mothers, and take their place as a female in culture, they must accept the missing phallus as a permanent loss in themselves. The introduction of the father/phallus, as the third term in the child's social world, breaks the early mother-child relationship for both sexes and brings on all the ensuing crises of identity through gender differentiation, so that all children lose the dyadic relation to the mother as they enter a wider society.

The phallus as a signifier, has a central, crucial position in language, for if language embodies the patriarchal law of the culture, its basic meanings refer to the recurring process by which sexual difference and subjectivity are acquired.

The Researcher would prefer, cautiously, to call the entry into the Symbolic 'different' rather 'than negative' for girls, since lack, in Lacanian theory, is as much an experience for men, as for women. Also the production of subject as the place and origin of meanings (the entry into language) is necessary for both men and women. The formation of the unconscious in the first instance occurs, when the child substitutes language for drives, demand for need, duplicating in the unconscious the prelinguistic arrangement of drives. Why should women whatever the relation of difference through which they enter the Symbolic be less adept at this system than men? Empirical studies that the Researcher has seen, don't suggest that there is that much significant variation between male and female speech until puberty, if ever, although it is a subject only recently taken up in linguistics. She will return to this problem briefly in the next section, but she wants to suggest tentatively here that it is at puberty, the second determining stage of gender identity in culture, that a distinction between male and female speakers is confirmed.

At puberty, female social identity is sealed by the onset of menstruation and fertility, and here, in western culture, is where the bar against the public speech of females is made. Male privilege and freedom can now be seen by the adult female to be allied with male use of public and symbolic language. In many cultures there is a strong taboo against women telling jokes. If we think of jokes as the derepressed symbolic discourse of common speech, we can see why jokes, particularly obscene ones, are rarely spoken from the perspective of femininity. Men reproduce it directly through the control of public speech, and women indirectly through the reproduction of children in the institution of family. Since women have spoken and learned speech up to and through adolescence, they continue to speak among themselves, and to their men in the domestic situation. It is a taboo, which it seems, in modern society, are made to be broken by the demands of women themselves. When women are freed from constant reproduction, when they are educated equally with men in childhood, when they join the labour force at his side, when wealth gives them leisure, when they are necessary and instrumental in effecting profound social change through revolution – at these points women will protest and break down the taboo.

It should be clear to the reader that what the Researcher has produced so far, is an account of a process by which women become segregated speakers, not an explanation of why this process should take place. There are therefore, two very important and distinct stages at which women's apparently weaker position in language is set. The first is at the Oedipal stage where the child, constructed as a speaking subject, must acknowledge social sex difference, and align herself with women and restricted speech - a distinction blurred by the restrictions on children's speech. The second stage, puberty, further distinguishes girls from boys by the appearance of adult sex difference and access to public discourse for men.

It is not an alternative to other sorts of social political analysis of the oppression of women in patriarchal culture through more brutal means, and in other ideological forms.

The seventeenth century in England, produced a number of important women poets whose first task seemed to be to challenge the bar against women as speakers and writers.

Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) says:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue

Who sayes, my hand a needle better fits

and looks back towards a golden age when there was no bias.

Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsa (1661-1720) attacks with more vigour and subtlety symbolic associations as spoken from the masculine position. For example, a rose, a cupped flower has no gender in English but to male poets it often represents the female. Its metaphorical associations are the female sexual organs; its metonymic associations are with muteness, frailty. In asserting her right 'to an original poetic gift Anne Finch rejects both the rose/women image and woman's approved leisure occupation, embroidery.
Anne Finch argues:

My hand delights to trace unusual things,

And deviates from the known and common way;

Nor will in fading silks compose
Faintly the inimitable rose...4

For women to write at all, was to be deviant. It is a brave and largely successful attempt at challenging metaphor through the subtle inversion of a traditional poetic image, but it strikes the Researcher as damned hard work. And the sliding of meaning, the effect of metonymy, is obvious. In defying tradition male-centred associations she reminds us of them; they assert themselves as meanings in spite of skill and care. The ghosts of the meanings she wishes to resist shadow her words.

Redon's Madonna, trails meanings behind it like the Milky Way. Silence makes a point central to the Researcher argument that it is perhaps difficult to make with any literary epigraph. Social silence as part of the constitution of female identity – i.e., subjectivity – is a crucial factor in her handing of written language. It is by no means clear that these observations would be true (if at all) of any group of women except perhaps upwardly mobile middle class white American women, and if true of this group it seems much more likely to be

related to a class plus gender instability than to be a particular quality of women's speech. The variations that Lakoff lists as being special to women's speech seem very slight when compared to the variations of grammatical structure in Black English compared to Standard English. Obviously, the subject has barely been opened much less closed, but one might hazard that women speak the language of their class, caste, or race and that any common variants which are in any case never fully observed do not in themselves limit the meanings their speech can have the sanction against female obscenity can have a particular application in the sanction against the telling of jokes and the use of wit by women, since dirty jokes are forms of common speech in which the repressed meanings of early sexual feelings are expressed in tight symbolic narratives.

It is the intra- and trans –class prejudice against women as speaker of all, which seems most likely to erode women's use of 'high' language. Women speak on sufferance in the patriarchal order. Yet although the culture may prefer them to be silent, they must have the faculty of speech in order that they may be recognized as human. One reading of the Dumb wife, whose speech is her only flaw, is that the physician's alchemy was necessary to reassure the husband that he had married a human woman, although her unrestrained, trivial speech, destroys his ability to see her as the ideal love object.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning comments bitterly on the prohibition against women as speakers of public language in her long feminist poem **Aurora Leigh**. Aurora, who defies society to become a major poet, recounts her education at the hands of her aunt who was a model of all that was 'womanly':

I read a score of books on womanhood…- books that

boldly assert

Their right of comprehending husband's talk

When not too deep, and even of answering

With pretty 'may it please you', or 'so it is', -

Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,

Particular worth and general missionariness,

As long as they keep quiet by the fire

And never say 'no' when the world says 'ay'… their,

In brief,

Potential faculty in everything

Of abdicating power in it.

Women writers from the seventeenth century onwards (when women first entered the literary ranks in any numbers) comment in moods which range from abnegation to outright anger on culture's prohibition against women's writing, often generalizing it to women's speech. Emily

Dickinson's They shut me up in Prose/As when a little Girl/They put me in the **closet**/ because they liked me 'still'–[190] condenses all these metaphors by connecting verbal imprisonment to the real restrictions of female childhood, and adds the point that the language most emphatically denied to women is the most concentrated form of symbolic language – poetry.

The consciousness of the taboo and its weight seemed to press heavily on the women who disobeyed it, and some form of apology, though urged with irony, occurs in almost all of the women poets – as well as in many prose writers, whether avowed feminists or not an urgent perhaps propitiating preface to their speech. In the introduction to the anthology the Researcher has ascribed this compulsion to an anticipatory response to male prejudice against women writers and so it was.

The best writing by women about women writing has been about fiction; the weakest about poetry. If fiction has been the most successful genre for women writers it is not, as has been often suggested, because the novel makes use of the domestic scene, or the life of the feelings, or 'trivial' observation, all those things supposedly close to women's experience, but because its scene is that world of social relations, of intersubjectivity, in which the author can reconcile to some extent her speech and her silence and be the first to explore and expose her bisexuality without the threat of losing her feminine identity.

Our ability to discern difference in similarity, and similarity in difference, is part of the same faculty that locates us in our gender identity 'the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it.' It is a brilliant exposition of the connections between symbolic language, cultural law, masculine identity and the self. In this analysis 'the child is father to the man.' Wordsworth sees all these aspects of the poet not in tension or contradiction but as aligned and complementary. Early romantic optimism did not recognize the resistance to meaning of language, or the disjunction between language and speech, which makes it difficult or present meanings to account wholly for absent ones.

Wordsworth was one of many romantics who believed in the transforming power of natural language. Political romantics like Thomas Paine saw democratic language as a radical political force, where aristocratic language had been instrumental in reproducing the mystifications that kept men in chains. If the poet or philosopher could appropriate speech, he could transform culture.

Trite as this schematized poetic account of melancholy seems it points the way towards the problem faced by all women poets who accepted some part of romantic doctrine. Puberty sealed femininity. The pre-pubescent girl might wander happily, like a boy, in 'upland solitude' but women, grown women, were tied by their maternal function and could only identify with nature in the shape of the controlling moon significantly 'mute arbitress of tides'. Nineteenth century middle-class women found themselves writing poetry in their spare time; as with men's amateur verse most of it is awful at a very basic level, imitative and unimaginative, though it appealed to other women readers, for it was published in surprising quantity and anthologized at mid century in vast compilations of women's verse. Even this 'bad' poetry is worth reading, for it suggests a pattern of difficulty with the handling of language and subject and the achievement of an individual 'voice' that does seem to relate to the structuring of femininity through language that the Researcher has described.

190 Ibid. p. 61

To elucidate this point the Researcher provides an interesting example. In a poem titled Bring Me Word How Tall She Is, which takes its theme from the leader 'How tall is your Rosalind? Just as high as my heart', (*Dora Greenwell –1821-82)* she writes about two childhood friends, 'he was/for God, and she for him', thrown out of the garden (Eden). They grow up in a fallen world in conflict but interdependent.

At length, in stature grown

He stands erect and free,

Yet stands he not alone

For his beloved be

Like him she loveth wise, like him she loveth free.

So wins she her desire

Yet stand they not apart;

For as she doth aspire

He grows, nor stands she higher

Than her Beloved's heart.

The surface of the poem seems to describe the model of women's achieved desire through relationship to the man; she becomes wise and free through her subordination; her location is no higher than the heart.

Women's poems where certain transsexual gender identifications are made but not internally decoded are not uncommon in this period. Compare the much more famous poem of Emily Dickinson, 'My life has stood a loaded gun-', which used the same overt image of master and slave but where object and subject merge in a fantasy of masculine identity and power. These poems are deliberately hard to understand, and some of our satisfaction in them is that we accept the metonymic force without wanting to look too hard for the missing signification, which is located inside the symbolized fantasy, without needing to be raised to full consciousness.

Here there is one line of explanation, 'So farewell life and love and pleasures new'. The female reference - lambs and sheep are often used as metaphors for the helpless, weakminded, voiceless world of women and children - is left open. The recognition of gender difference also means separation from the mother, and adolescence as separation from sisters, but the unashamed courting pigeons suggest heterosexual love as surface, controlling meaning.

Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson, both image the speaking female as a song bird, but male poets use this image as well for themselves, which suggests that when women take it over, it has transsexual connotations. It is an apt image of escape from female limitations, for birds' maternal duties don't keep them from flying or singing.

Sense is made of this passage if we attach it to the permanent, eternal lack and absence to which women are to become reconciled, or else live in constant mourning and self-pity. The

poem is a sustained lyric attempt, and a poetically well-realized one, to produce a symbolic representation of the crisis of women who cannot accept or be sealed by their femininity, just as Goblin Market is an allegorical attempt to project a female sisterhood that protects each other from a poisonous male sensuality. Goblin Market can stand on its own as a fairy story, although it too should be read metonymically rather than metaphorically, but 'In an Old World Thicket' only hangs together as a sustained symbolic attempt if the missing meanings are related to female experience. Universalized, they seem dislocated and weak.

The overt and hidden subject of women's poetry, is often dialectic between those two poles. Women's poetry also suggests that language cannot be conquered or taken over simply by itself. Lacan states the contradiction women face in writing poetry as a means of doing battle against their linguistic oppression in culture, when, in another context he asks, 'what do we have in metonymy other than the power to bypass the obstacles of social censure? Sylvia Plath's poetry works towards a gothic symbolization of the ineluctable patterning of literary language, to express patriarchal law:

> **Love is the uniform of my bald nurse**
>
> **Love is the bone and sinew of my curse**
>
> **The vase reconstructed houses the elusive rose.**[191]

This understanding should, simultaneously, make women better poets and point them towards wider remedies for the cultural conditions that impede their speech, which is why the Researcher has chosen to work on a subject such as this.

The Feminist Politics of Literary Theory

About ten years ago, during the high point of feminist activism in Britain you could find a new-minted piece of folk wisdom inscribed on the walls of women's loss throughout the country, and quoted endlessly in the literature of the movement: 'A Woman Without a Man is Like a Fish Without a Bicycle.' As a defiant slogan of independence and autonomy, it has always irritated the Researcher, not only for its' separatist' implications or its disturbing, Dali-esque juxtaposition of selves and things, but also for its complacent essentialism and the false (in-) congruities of its metaphor. Women aren't like fish, supplied with a natural element and equipped for easy passage through it. The 'revolutionary' choice for them will never be for a streamlined new identity in harmony with an environment in which rust-prone, male-designed transport technology is redundant.

Althusser, Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, Macherey, Foucault have been appropriated by English speaking feminists as part of their analysis of sexual difference, of the persistence of femininity and of the crucial place of visual and written representation in the construction, maintenance and subversion of sexual ideologies.

The work of Julia Kristeva has been especially influential and important. In particular Irigaray and Wittig have suggested to aspiring Anglophone feminist novelists and poets that imaginative writing can elide the space between a theory of difference and an art practice.

Literature, as a cultural object has a different place in feminist cultural and historical analysis than it does in androcentric criticism. One of the central historical discourses in which sexual difference is represented as both a social and psychic reality; it is also one of the few public genres in which women themselves spoke about these questions. For feminist critics, the literary is always/already political in very obvious and common sense ways. For

191 Kaplan, Salt and Bitter and Good p. 154.

this reason, much feminist criticism of the late sixties and early seventies worked on literary texts by women as if they were 'true' accounts of the socially real, and on literary texts by men as if they were fantasies saturated with dominant and biased sexual meaning. This 'common sense' approach to the literary, which did not have a theory of representation, or of the specificity of imaginative writing, and which assumed a curious psychic separatism about the processes of writing by men and women, was soon seen to be of somewhat limited use in understanding how sexual ideologies are constructed and circulated so that they assume 'natural' meaning for both men and women as writers and readers. While male critics in Britain had as a main spur to the development of Marxist criticism the need to dismantle the hegemony of Leavisite notions of culture, and behind them, a conservative nineteenth-century romanticism, feminist critics, who were very much on the margins of the tertiary teaching of literature – though women form the majority of students of literature-were intervening to overthrow both these older humanisms and to criticize the androcentric assumptions of the new male Marxist critics. Literature, film, and the visual arts were central objects of feminist analysis of women's subordination, for it was in these practices, together with the critical consensus that supported them and constructed their canons, that the languages and images through which subordinate female identities were naturalized, could be identified. Moreover, both the visual and written text, demonstrates the connection between our fantasies of sexual difference (the psychic structure of difference) and its social meanings. Marxist literary criticism has always been some-what nervous and tentative in its handling of the construction of social hierarchy in literary texts, as if class were only really meaningful as a lived relation, or an economic fact. Feminism on the contrary has insisted from Mary Wollstonecraft onwards that representations of sexual identity as well as its social articulation are both crucial elements in the subordination of women. It was Wollstonecraft too who identified the novel as the popular literary genre directed at women readers that would feed and reinforce denigrating, 'sentimental' definitions of femininity. Both in the nineteenth century and today, feminism has seen the question of the representation of women, sexual difference and gender relations as a 'political' question. Since the literary was one of the primary sites of that representation it could never, whatever its didactic purpose, wholly assume for the woman reader a universalizing function that obscured the real relations of social hierarchy and difference.

Women were, the Researcher guesses, virtually included in this discussion, as feminism was one of the unarticulated targets of the defenders of formalist art. Perhaps, in order to point out the specific uses of 'theory' for feminism in general and feminist criticism in particular the Researcher desires to tell a story, one that places those uses in concrete historical context, rather than asserting a general influence.

From 1976 until 1978 or 1991 there was a group called unaesthetically but accurately the Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective. They ranged in age from under twenty to over forty, and there were always some Americans (either expatriates or temporary members) among them.

The Researcher's fear of theory as an alien and impenetrable discourse - something felt by many trained in the humanities - was permanently dissolved and the sense of its political uses, in analysis representation and relating that analysis to wider socialist and feminist questions was clarified and confirmed.

Terry Eagleton in both Literary Theory (1983) and in The Function of Criticism (1984) has made interesting points along these lines, and Francis Mulhern has also talked about the renaissance of the political novel in the utopian writing of American feminist writers, both Black and white. A cultural politics without a strong political culture behind it is condemned

to reminisce (note the increasing number of feminist autobiographies that have appeared in the last few years). Kermode and Eagleton differed importantly on the question of text and canon, and on the possibility or desirability of politicizing the literature.

Women, Writing and Language: Making the Silences Speak

This section looks at women and words: at women's writing and women's relationship to language, and at what contemporary feminist theory has had to say about these issues.

Why should we look at literature in terms of feminist politics? Great Literature is told, to be about 'universal truths'. Gender was irrelevant.

This picture was challenged by the emergence, in the late 1960s, of the contemporary women's movement. Feminist researchers began to uncover the vast body of neglected women's writing: forgotten reputations were retrieved, and long out-of-print texts republished by feminist publishing houses such as Virago and the Women's Press. But redressing the balance, proving that women's writing was 'as good as' men's, was not the only issue. The reconstruction of women's history has been a central concern for contemporary feminism, and the study of women's writing has played a vital part in that process. The area of fiction, in which women have been actively engaged in large numbers since the eighteenth century (Spencer, 1986; Spender, 1986) have provided a particularly rich source of material about women's lives. 'Classic' texts, as the Researcher will be demonstrating, suddenly looked different when read from a feminist perspective.

Can literature tell 'the truth' about women's lives? Is it the case, as Virginia Woolf suggested, that the man's sentence' is 'unsuited for a woman's use' (Woolf, 1929, p. 73)? Is it possible to identify or diverse an alternative, 'female language'? Don't generalized terms like 'the woman writer' and 'the female imagination' effectively marginalize Black and lesbian writers? What do books mean in women's lives? What about the reader's 'race', class, sexuality: aren't The Researcher aim in this chapter is to introduce the different questions which feminist critics have raised, and to show how changing the terms of the question affects the 'reading', or interpretation, of the text. Each section deals with a different strand within feminist criticism, but the approaches identified are not mutually exclusive. Most individual critics in fact 'belong' within at least two sections: there are Black lesbian critics, socialist feminist critics influenced by French feminism, and so on.

Contemporary feminist critics have rediscovered those subversive qualities, but while most feminist reading of Jane Eyre identify a secret of 'repressed' text buried beneath the surface of the apparently simple tale of the governess who gets her man, the nature and significance of that hidden text is seen in very different ways.

The Researcher here has concentrated upon feminist literary theory because this is often regarded as the most challenging and difficult area, but she does not want to neglect the wealth of writing, which is being produced by women today. At the end of this section she will move beyond Jane Eyre to indicate some recent trends and developments in contemporary feminist fiction too.

Declaring it aloud: images experience

'Wicked and cruel boy!' I said. 'You are like a murderer –you are like a slave-driver- you are like the Roman emperors!

I had read Goldsmith's History of Rome, and had formed my opinion of Nero, Caligula, &c. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud. (Jane Eyre, p. 43)

Jane Eyre: begins with an assault upon a girl by a male text, or, more correctly, by a male armed with a text. The two interlinked events – male assault and female response – may be seen as representative of the two feminist approaches to literature which were dominant in the early 1970s: the analysis of 'images' and the appeal to 'experience'. Here, similar questions are asked in two, rather different ways.

'Images of Women' criticism asks: What have men's texts, and male mastery over the text done to women's heads? Feminist critics dissected the sexual stereotyping pervasive in male-authored texts in the literary 'canon', in children's literature, magazines and popular fiction. In contrast to the dominant, negative images- such as passive woman and active man, self-sacrificing virgin and predatory whore- feminists sought to identify and encourage alternative, positive images of women (see, for example, Cornillon, 1972).

'Authority of Experience' criticism asks: 'What happens when a woman speaks out, gives her interpretation of the text on the basis of a woman's experience?' In her 1977 essay on Jane Eyre, Maurianne Adams emphasized the cohesiveness of women's experience, and the reader's identification with the novel's heroine. Jane is, according to Adams, an instinctive feminist who suppresses her feminist awareness, only to have it surface in her turbulent dreams.

By exposing the distortions and preconceptions which underpin the portrayal of women in literature, and by asserting a woman's right to speak about her reading as a woman, they questioned the asserting that the male-dominated literary canon offered a universal 'truth', transmitted by the (usually male) tutor to the compliant female student.

Opening the chamber: gynocriticism

The red-room was a spare chamber, very seldom slept in ...... (Jane Eyre, p. 45)

A Literature of Their Own is one of the 'classics' of feminist 'gynocriticism', a term coined by Showalter herself to define an approach concerned with the woman as writer, and including 'the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history: and of course, studies of particular writers and works' (Showalter, 1979, p. 25). It is a broad definition, which could encompass much of contemporary feminist criticism. In practice, however, 'gynocriticism' has come to be associated with the quest to identify a specifically female literary tradition. In the late 1970s, pioneering texts such as Showalter's book and Ellen Moers's Literary Women (1978) re-opened the 'spare chamber', and set out to provide a map of women's literary history, by rediscovering neglected texts and reinterpreting familiar ones, by analyzing the lives of and connections between 'literary women', and by identifying shared themes, tropes (figures of speech) and plot-devices.

Showalter emphasizes the conditions in which women's writing has been produced and received, placing Jane Eyre historically, within what she sees as a unified but 'disrupted', and specifically British, female literary tradition. Jane Eyre belongs to what Showalter calls the 'feminine' phase of British women's writing, in which the female 'subculture' is secret, ritualized, characterized by internalization and self-censorship; women, united by the physical facts of the female life-cycle (menstruation, childbirth) but unable to express them openly, developed a covert symbolic language to explore the range of female experience.

Gynocriticism opens the secret chamber, but does not tell us how to arrange the furniture. Showalter and Moers both draw upon Freud in interpreting the recurrent motifs in women's writing, but such psychoanalytic borrowings are random rather than systematic. While the idea of a female literary tradition can be a fruitful basis from which to research and study women's writing, it carries the risk both of perpetuating the traditional marginalisation

of women's literary production, and of assuming that, at any point in time, a unified female subculture can be satisfactorily identified.

Truth and the author: Post-structuralism

I am merely telling the truth. (Jane Eyre, p. 140). Jane's claim to be telling 'the truth' is linked to some caustic comments about the supposedly angelic nature of children, but its position in the novel is interesting. It comes just before the famous 'feminist manifesto' in Chapter 12, in which Jane declares that: women feel just as men feel…they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (141)

Taken to its logical conclusion, Barthes's essay renders the author's gender irrelevant. Feminist critics have continued, for the most part, to focus upon writing by women and to see the writer's gender as significant, but the influence of 'post-structuralism' has resulted in a new kind of analysis, which sees the text not as an authentic expression of experience, but as a site for 'the discursive construction of the meaning of gender's (Weedon, 1987, p. 138).
'Post-structuralism' is an umbrella term which encompasses recent developments within literary criticism, including work influenced by such diverse thinkers as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva.
Post-structuralist feminist analyses reject the idea of an authentic female voice or experience, but see the study of women's writing as a means of understanding patriarchy, mapping 'the possible subject positions open to women' (Weedon, 1987, p. 157).

Spliting the subject: socialist feminist criticism

For the Anglo-American critics of the 1970s, the 'truth' of Jane Eyre lies in its expression of feminist rage. While Anglo-American criticism emphasizes the cohesiveness of female experience, socialist feminist criticism foregrounds contradiction, in the interests of identifying the complex ways in which gender intersects with class and 'race' within the literary text.
The case for a synthesis between psychoanalysis, semiotics and a materialist feminist attention to class and 'race' has been persuasively argued by Cora Kaplan (1986b), one of the original members of the Collective.('Pandora's Box', 1986b, p. 162).

Socialist feminism's central contribution has been to emphasize that both fiction and its readers are the products of specific social structures. Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction (1987) and Terry Lovell's Consuming Fiction (1987) both presented important correctives to the influential arguments of The Madwoman in the Attic, by emphasizing the ways in which bourgeois domestic ideology facilitated the emergence of the middle-class woman writer. In Jane Eyre, she argued, the threat of social disruption is contained by being located on to the body of Bertha: political resistance is gendered, neutralized and reconceived as aberrant sexual desire through the spectre of the 'monstrous female'. On the one hand, women have consistently played a central part in the production and reception of literary culture; on the other hand, women have been systematically reduced to the position of transmitters, rather than producers, of bourgeois culture. Women have been allowed to 'speak' but only on certain terms; a small number of female-authored texts have survived the process of literary 'canonisation' but, Lovell suggested, 'wo-man-to-woman' fiction has consistently been filtered out.

Taking up French: Women, Language and French Feminism

'Jane, what are you doing?'

'Learning German.'

'I want you to give up German and learn Hindustani.'

'You are not in earnest?'

'In such earnest that I must have it so: and I will tell you why.' (Jane Eyre, p. 423)

St. John's words may be seen as exemplifying both patriarchal domination over language and the displacement of a shared women's discourse: German is the new 'tongue' which Jane studies with Diana and Mary, and St. John's inflexible imposition of his chosen language upon Jane contrasts with the fluid and generous interchange which, as already noted, characterizes her relationship with his sisters.

The relationship between language and gender has been much discussed by feminist theorists; the Researcher has already mentioned the ways in which radical feminists have set out to challenge patriarchal control over meaning. While there are some interesting overlaps between the two approaches, there is a central difference between the radical feminist vision of an oppositional, authentic language of female experience, and this strand of French feminist theory, which (drawing on the psychoanalytic model given by Jacques Lacan) sees 'woman as unrepresentable within existing linguistic structures.

Within Lacanian theory, the acquisition of gendered identity corresponds with, and is inseparable from, the acquisition of language. Entry into the 'symbolic order' of language and culture is an essential precondition of becoming 'human', able to communicate with other humans, but the symbolic order is a gendered order, which inscribes and confirms male dominance. Woman remain marginal within culture, placed 'in a special relation to language which becomes theirs as a consequence of becoming human, and at the same time not theirs as a consequence of becoming female' (Kaplan, 1986a, p. 82). L'ecriture feminine expresses both the free-floating pleasures or pre-linguistic, ungendered infancy, and the multiple diffuse nature of female jouissance (orgasmic pleasure). Whereas 'masculine; language is linear, finite, structured, rational and unified, 'feminine' language is fluid, decentred, playful, fragmented and open-ended.

French feminist theory has been attractive to feminists because it offers a celebratory and inspirational vision of what might be, the subversive potential of women's words. Julia Kristeva (1986) sees 'semiotic' language (the rhythms, intonations and erotic energies characteristic of the pre-linguistic stage) as equally accessible to both men and women, since both have to repress the feminine upon entry to the 'symbolic'. For Luce Irigaray (1985), parler femme expresses the 'doubleness' of female physiology: the two lips of the vulva speak a language more complex, subtle and diversified than that of male desire. British critics have tended to prefer Kristeva's separation of feminine language from female bodies, but it is arguable that women do after all have bodies, and that Cixous an Irigaray offer ways of representing (and challenging) the experience of the female body as socially and culturally mediated, rather than innate.

The impact of French feminism has been controversial (Moi, 1985; Jones, 1986). One problem is that to identify a particular kind of language with the 'feminine' is to risk perpetuating patriarchal notions of gender difference: order, logic, and control over language are 'masculine': the irrational, the marginal, the contradictory are 'feminine'. As Deborah Cameron comments,

> To place women 'outside language' in our theories is to deny ourselves something of crucial importance: the power to shape new meanings for a different and better world.
> (Cameron, 1992, p. 227)

To reject the realist text as colluding with the phallocentric order is to relegate much of what women have written – and, equally importantly, much of what women read – to the realms of the inauthentic.

The influence of Lacanian theory and French feminism is apparent in the analyses of Jane Eyre offered by Margaret Homans (Bearing the Word, 1986) and Elizabeth Bronfen (Over Her Dead Body, 1992), but neither Homans nor Bronfen sees the realist woman writer as 'inauthentic'. Both, rather, focus on the complex and competitive relationship between the 'literal' and the 'figurative' in Victorian discourse, and the problems which this conflict presented to the woman writer, who was faced with a 'dominant myth of language that excludes the possibility of women writing' (Homans, 1986, p. 68). The cultural relationship between femininity and death is the central subject of Bronfen's book. She argues that the deaths of Helen Burns and Bertha Mason are an essential part of the process by which Jane emerges from her former position of social ambivalence.

Reader, I married him: gender and genre

Reader, I married him. (Jane Eyre, p. 474)

So far, the Researcher has been focusing on *Jane Eyre* as a 'feminist text'. Is it the case, as Germaine Greer once suggested, that romantic fiction is 'the opiate of the supermenial' (Greer, 1970, p. 188) and the romantic hero the invention of 'women cherishing the chains of their bondage' (p.180)? More recent feminist studies have argued that romantic novels offer women readers a way of dealing with real anxieties and difficulties (male power and aggression, female dependence and confinement within the home) and a chance to fantasize alternatives: masculine tenderness, female power and desire (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1987; Belsey, 1994).

This re-assessment of romance is related to feminist interest in the relationship between gender and 'genre' (literary form), and in popular fiction by women (see, for example, Radstone, 1988; Carr, 1989; Cranny-Francis, 1990). Do certain genres offer particular possibilities for the woman writer? Violence, vulnerability, conflict and fear are central issues in the thriller, a field in which women have long been prominent (Coward and Semple, 1989); science fiction, while often regarded as a 'male' form, offers opportunities, which women writers have seized, for fantasising alternative worlds, whether terrifying or desirable (Lefanu, 1988; Armitt, 1991). As Light (1984) has shown, subversive explorations of female desire may be underpinned by conservative assumptions about class.

Socialist feminists have been particularly active in this area; it is noticeable that several of the original members of the Marxist Feminist Literature Collective subsequently turned their attention to the analysis of the bestsellers written and read by women (Kaplan, 1986; Taylor, 1989), to the meaning which books actually have in women's lives and to the ways in which those meanings may differ, at different times or from within different cultural contexts (O'Rourke, 1989; Taylor, 1989). We need more work on the female reader, which still remains an underresearched area (but see Flint, 1993: Smith, 1993). But for now, the Researcher wants to return to the woman writer, leaving Jane Eyre in order to look, necessarily briefly, at the impact of feminism upon contemporary women's fiction.

The politics of language: beyond the gender principle?

In our culture, marriage is a privileged place for the interaction of the sexes. Nelly Furman, following him, holds that understanding marriage as a human experience, a social structure or a verbal deed can help us perceive the ideological values at work in language as well as in society. Literary criticism is one of the places where feminism confronts patriarchal values. Feminist criticism unveils the prejudices at work in our appreciation of cultural artefacts, and shows us how the linguistic medium promotes and transmits the values woven through the fabric of our society. While the egalitarian argument in feminist criticism calls for equal representation in literature of women and men's experience of life, post-structuralist feminism denounces representation itself as already a patriarchal paradigm. Marriage, thus can serve to illustrate how differing modes of feminist criticism relate to our patriarchal culture and its language.

*

If the function of the feminist endeavour is to unveil the workings of the patriarchal system of values and display the structures which control the social and cultural order, then we must begin, as Helene Cixous points out, by confronting the politics of language:

> You'll understand why I think that no political reflection can dispense with reflection on language, with work on language.
>
> (Cixous 1981, p. 45)

At the end of his study of The Elementary Structures of Kinship, Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that 'linguists and sociologists do not merely apply the same methods but are studying the same thing' (Levi-Strauss 1969, p. 493). For Levi-Strauss, marriage is a form of human communication. The prohibition of incest, which imposes the exchange of women, is not, according to Levi-Strauss, a cultural option but a social necessity. Because it channels the biological family into the social organization, marriage is the agency that marshals the interaction of nature and culture. Since, in Levi-Strauss's view, marriage operates like a communication device between groups, it functions fundamentally like a linguistic system; in marriage the exchange of women assures the continuity of the social structure, whereas the circulation of words performs a similar action for the linguistic system:

> The emergence of symbolic thought must have required that women, like words, should be things that were exchanged. In the matrimonial dialogue of men, woman is never purely what is spoken about; for if women in general represent a certain category of signs, destined to a certain kind of communication, each woman preserves a particular value arising from her talent, before and after marriage, for taking her part in a duet.
>
> (Levi-Strauss 1969, p. 496)

Levi-Strauss's contention that woman is both a person and a sign, a human being and a depersonalized, subjectless structure, clearly indicates that the discussion of woman's relationship to language - of woman and/in language - will take different paths according to whether woman is understood as being a person or a sign.

For proponents of the biological argument, sexual differences explain the distinctive features of a feminine or a masculine 'nature'. It is therefore not surprising that the study of perceptual differences between women and men, has elicited the interest of feminist scholars both in the social sciences and in the humanities. In literature, this has led feminist critics to collect and study the works of women authors in order to recover 'a female tradition'. 'The female literary tradition comes from the still-evolving relationship between women writers and their society', she tells us, and she adds: 'I am intentionally looking, not at an innate

sexual attitude, but at the ways in which the self-awareness of woman writer has translated itself into a literary form in a specific place and time-span' (Showalter 1977, p. 12). Similarly, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the common thread in the female literary tradition is the search for an emancipated self: 'the striking coherence we noticed in literature by women could be explained by a common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art and society' (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, p. xii). For Gilbert and Gubar, as for Showalter, women authors are individuals who react in a collective, sisterly manner to a common social reality. This explains the recurrence of topics, themes, images and metaphors in the literary works of women which was noted by Elaine Showalter (1977, p. 11), and also stated by Gilbert and Gubar:

Feminist critics have tried to understand how social restrictions have shaped women's lives and their relationship to art and literature, and they have then proceeded to validate women's perceptions of life by restoring their writings to public view. By retrieving works written by women and by giving these works the kind of visibility and authority hitherto accorded to men's literary production, feminist critics have established the corpus of a female literary tradition.

Feminist consciousness has given a new ardour and excitement to literary studies. By studying the status of women in literature and the works of women authors, feminist critics have unveiled some of the biases at work in traditional approaches to literature – namely the fact that literary genres, situations and characters have often been defined according to a masculine perspective. Among those notions, which remain unchallenged, are the assumed 'universality' of human experience and the 'reflection' of experience in literary representation. Besides a belief in the possibility and desirability of equality, many feminist critics embrace the learning imparted by traditional humanism and consequently take for granted that, as human beings, we all share basic universal values, and that, although women's and men's experience of the world may be different, we have a common view of experience, a collective understanding of language and literature – in short, that we share an unquestioned 'common sense'

For Gilbert and Gubar, as for Showalter, there is no doubt that literature reflects life, and that experience of life is translated into literature. Women's alienation from the literary canon is due to the fact that the literary works of male authors reflect chiefly a male view of life, which is not necessarily women's experience. To describe, as Gilbert and Gubar have sought to do in The Madwoman in the Attic, 'both the experience that generates metaphor and the metaphor that creates experience' (1979, p. xiii) implies a causal relationship between experience and metaphor, which simultaneously suggests that life and language are conceived as separate (or separable) entities. When literature is viewed as a representational art whose function is to 'picture' life, what is ignored or pushed aside is the part played by language.

Language, from a post-structuralist position, is not an empirical object but a structuring process; and questions concerning women and literature will be broached differently according to whether we apprehend language as a stable medium or a continuous process.

Literature may be thought of as a representation of life, but literature can also be viewed as a non-referential linguistic system of communication. Like woman, in Levi-Strauss's analysis, literature is at the juncture of two systems. If, as Levi-Strauss suggests, marriage functions like a linguistic system of communication, then a study of marriage as a linguistic operation could help us understand language as a non-referential system.

In order to describe both women and men on a par, through equivalent terms whose order need not be fixed, the sentence 'I now pronounce you man and wife' should be changed to either 'I now pronounce you husband and wife', if one wishes to call attention to the social status of the parties, or to 'I now pronounce you man and woman', if one wants to suggest that

marriage defines the essence of the two sexes. Because the influence of language can be insidious, the traditional marital pronouncement may help perpetuate sexual discrimination.

Marriage, like most social interaction, is realized in and through the linguistic medium. Before becoming a social reality, marriage is a verbal deed. The speech act which institutes marriage is preceded by a dialogue where each of the participants is also asked to perform a speech act by answering 'I do' to the question 'Do you take this woman or this man to be your lawful wedded wife or husband?'[192]

The literary text is the space where writer and reader, narrator and narrate engage in dialogue, and where a specific literary piece enters into the literary system and inscribes itself into a network of intertextual relationships with other literary works.[193]

Traditional forms of discourse be it theoretical, 'realistic', epistolary, confessional or expository, whether written by a woman or a man, are necessarily modulated and codified by our patriarchal cultural values. Thus, as Stephen Heath explains, taking theoretical discourse as an example:

> any answer to the questions posed will be in terms of the identification of a discourse that is finally masculine, not because of some conception of theory as male but because in the last resort any discourse which fails to take account of the problem of sexual difference in its enunciation and address will be, within a patriarchal order, precisely indifferent, a reflection of male domination.
>
> (Heath 1978, p. 53)

When feminist critics focus their interest on women's experience of life and its 'picturing' in literature, what is left unquestioned is whether literature conceived as a representational art is not per se a patriarchal form of discourse. What is take for granted in the study of images and their relations to experience is that the 'picturing' of experience is gender-neutral or free of ideological value.

Finally, from a Saussurean viewpoint, language exists only as the result of an interaction by a subject with the linguistic code. The concept of literature as text, as a textual linguistic construct, is founded on the Saussurean understanding of linguistic phenomena as a dynamic relational system of oppositional differences.

Traditionally, critics have taken a respectful stance towards authors, their presumed intentions, and historical accuracy. In the textual reading process, both the writer's and the reader's subjectivity are being inscribed simultaneously. Since, for the textual reader, literature is not a representation of experience but something that is experienced, from a feminist viewpoint the question is not whether a literary work has been written by a woman and reflects her experience of life, or how it compares to other works by women, but rather how it lends itself to be read from a feminist position.

We may wish to make our language our own, but we must first recognize that we are moulded into speaking subjects by language, and that language shapes our perceptual world. Like clothes for the androgynous protagonist of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, language may serve as a protective garment or a tool, but, by serving us, language also transforms us:

192 Sylvia Plath, 'The Stones', The Colossus and other Poems, New York 1968.

193 For a discussion of the concept of 'common sense' and its relationship to literature, see Belsey (1980), ch.1.

> Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices then merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us... Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast; but they would mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking.
>
> (Woolf 1928, pp. 170-1)

Not only are we born into a language, which moulds us, but also any knowledge of the world, which we experience, is itself also articulated in language. This interdependence between life and language precludes any order of precedence or causality between experience and metaphor.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has shown that one's entry into language is due to a fundamental alienation resulting from a splitting within the subject (Lacan 1977).[194]

The mirror-stage is the initial step in the process of an individual's integration in the social system; it marks the child's entrance into the symbolic order, which is the realm of what Lacan calls the Law-of-the-Father or Name-of-the-Father. Jane Gallop explains the relevance of these terms as follows:

> The Name-of-the-Father... is a powerful Lacanian term, actually a Lacanian displacement of what Freud bequeathed him/us, the Oedipal Father, absolute primal Father. Where as Freud's Oedipal Father might be taken for a real, biological father, Lacan's Name-of-the-Father operates explicitly in the register of language. The Name-of-the-Father: the patronym, patriarchal law, patrilineal identity, language as our inscription into patriarchy.
>
> (Gallop 1982, p. 47)

In order to disclose the arbitrariness of patriarchal hegemony, feminist critics engage in a dialogical opposition to traditional models and values. In this respect, a textual approach to literature guided by feminist concerns can be an effective political tool. As expressed by Jane Gallop:

> Infidelity then is a feminist practice of undermining the Name-of-the-Father. The unfaithful reading strays from the author, the authorized, produces that which does not hold as a reproduction, as a representation. Infidelity is not outside the system of marriage, the symbolic, patriarchy, but hollows it out, ruins it, from within.
>
> (Gallop 1982, p. 48)

When the child, after the mirror-stage, enters the symbolic order, which allows for intersubjective communication, she or he discovers that language itself has symbolic value. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud describes the behaviour of a child who, although deeply attached to his mother, never cried when she left him.

While Freud directs his attention to the symbolic function of play, for Lacan this scene discloses the symbolic function of language. The child's verbalizations and game- playing enact his frustrated desire for his mother and his anticipated pleasure at her eventual return.

The symbolic order – that is, the order of the Name-of-the-Father, the order of language, which allows intersubjective communication – conveys the very values of the social system, which it reflects, supports and encompasses. Because 'language as symbolic

194 Austin remarked that when we utter 'I do' in a marital ceremony 'we are doing something – namely, marrying, rather than reporting something, namely that we are marrying' (Austin 1975, p. 13). For further study of speech-act theory, see Searle (1969).

function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother' (Kristeva 1980, p. 136), the French linguist Julia Kristeva posits the existence of another order, an order which does not refute the symbolic order but is anterior to it, and which she associates with the maternal aspects of language. The semiotic and symbolic orders function in a dialogical relationship...

For Kristeva, although women have a privileged relationship to birth, gestation and the body as a place of origin, the territory of the maternal is not a space confined to, or defined by, biological characteristics; it is the position a subject, any subject, can assume towards the symbolic order.

From an empirical viewpoint, the body is a concrete, observable object; but, viewed within a sign system, the body is a social signifier. While sex is an anatomical fact, sexuality is culturally devised; it is the manner in which society fictionalizes its relationship to sex and creates gender roles. The works of these male avant-garde writers stand in opposition to the coherent, 'meaningful', logical discourse of culture in the Name-of-the-Father. Whether written by a woman or by a man, a linguistic intervention which ruptures accepted (acceptable) discursive practices reverts us to the constitution of the social subject, which is predicated on the repression of the maternal.

From a Derridian position, the feminist endeavour cannot be conceived in terms of male or female, feminine or masculine; it can only be thought of beyond such polarities as a kind of sexual plurality. In an interview conducted by Christie. V. McDonald, Derrida imagines the (im) possibility and the seductiveness of such sexuality:

Marriage produces a single social unit wherein differences among individuals are seemingly dissolved under one name, the name of the father. Thus, whether one views marriage as the blissful coming together of equal voices speaking in unison, or as the site of an ongoing dialogue between individuals continuously affirming their differences, we cannot escape the structure it imposes, the patriarchal society it sustains.

While the egalitarian argument in feminist criticism calls for equal representation in literature of women's and men's experience of life, post-structuralist feminism challenges representation itself as already a patriarchal paradigm, thus positing the existence of a different discursive practice.

By proceeding from a consideration of woman as person to woman as sign, this section of the chapter has moved from sisters to wife to mother, and the question of woman's relationship to language shifted from woman and language to woman in language, replacing conjunctional bondage by spatial enclosure. Feminist criticism thereby affirms and gives voice to our Otherness.

Marginally and Subversion: Julia Kristeva

L'Etrangere

When Roland Barthes in 1970 sat down to write an enthusiastic review of one of Kristeva's early works, he chose to call it L'etrangere', which translates approximately as 'the strange, or foreign, woman'. Though an obvious allusion to Kristeva's Bulgarian nationality (she first arrived in Paris in 1966), this title captures what Barthes saw as the unsettling impact of Kristeva's work. 'Julia Kristeva changes the place of things', Barthes wrote, 'she always destroys the latest preconception, the one we thought we could be comforted by, the one of which we could be proud... she subverts authority, the authority of monologic science'[195]. If

the introductory chapter of this book drew on some of her ideas in order to stage a confrontation with several currents in Anglo-American feminist criticism, The Researcher would like to repeat that manoeuvre here and examine Anglo-American feminist linguistics from a position informed by Kristevan semiotics. It is therefore important to realize that Kristevan theory is only partly and fragmentarily commensurate with what, in spite of the strong Australian influence in this particular field, the Researcher has chosen to call Anglo-American feminist linguistics. What follows is, therefore, her attempt to examine some of the issues raised by feminist linguistics from a 'Kristevan' perspective.

Kristeva and Anglo-American feminist linguistics

According to Cheris Kramer, Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley, the main areas of concern to Anglo-American feminist linguistics are:

(1) Sex differences and similarities in language use, in speech and nonverbal communication;
(2) Sexism in language, with emphasis on language structure and content:
(3) Relations between language structure and language use (two topics usually treated separately);

The worrying aspect of this enumeration, is the lack of any discussion of what 'language' might mean: it is as if the field or object of study ('language') is unproblematical for these researchers. Kristeva, on the other hand, spends much time discussing precisely the problem of 'language'. It is discovering the rules governing the coherence of our fundamental social code: language, either system of signs or strategy for the transformation of logical sequences.

(24)

The speaking subject must instead be constructed in the field of thought developed after Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. Language then, for her, is a complex signifying process rather than a monolithic system. If linguists studied poetry, she writes, they would change their view of language and come away 'suspecting that the signifying process is not limited to the language system, but that there is also speech, discourse, and within them, a causality other than linguistic: a heterogeneous destructive causality'

(27).

Sex differences in language use

Turning back to the aims of Anglo-American feminist linguistics quoted above, we can start by focusing on 'sex differences and similarities in language use, in speech and nonverbal communication'. The research is further confused, they say, by the fact that 'similar speech by females and by males has been shown, to be perceived differentially (e.g. boys' "anger" vs. girls' "fear") and evaluated in different ways' (640-1). Thorne and Henley put this point more forcefully in another context, when they write that: 'In short, the significance of gestures changes when they are used by men or women; no matter what women do, their behavior may be taken to symbolize inferiority' (28).

It would seem that the pursuit of sex difference in language is not only a theoretical impossibility, but also a political error. Difference, Jacques Derrida has argued, is not a concept. Differences always take us elsewhere, we might say, involve us in an ever-proliferating network of displacement and deferral of meaning.

195 For further discussion of the dialogical aspect of literature, see Kristeva (1980).

The researchers in this field, therefore find themselves obliged to search ceaselessly for ways in which language hampers women's linguistic projects. Politically, this projection of male and female as unquestioned essences is surely always dangerous for feminists: if any sex difference were ever to be found, it could always (and always would) be used against us, largely to prove that some particularly unpleasant activity is 'natural' for women and alien to men.

Kristeva's theory of language as a heterogeneous signifying process located in and between speaking subjects, suggests an alternative approach: the study of specific linguistic strategies in specific situations. As far as the study of sex differences in language goes, any analysis of isolated fragments (sentences) in literature, as for instance in the much-quoted case of Virginia Woolf's theory of the 'woman's sentence', will warrant no specific conclusions whatever, since the very same structures can be found in male writers (Proust, for example, or other modernists). The only way of producing interesting results from such texts, is to take the whole of the utterance (the whole text) as one's object, which means studying its ideological, political and psychoanalytical articulations, its relations with society, with the psyche and – not least – with other texts.

Sexism in language

If we turn now to the second main category of Anglo-American feminist linguistic research, the study of sexism in language, it becomes evident that we run up against many of the same assumptions as in the study of sex differences. Cheris Kramarae defines sexism in language ('language' here seems to refer to the English language), as the way in which the 'English lexicon is a structure organized to glorify maleness and ignore, trivialize or derogate femaleness' (42). In Man Made Language Dale Spender asserts that:

> The English language has been literally man made and ... it is still primarily under male control.... This monopoly over language is one of the means by which males have ensured their own primacy, and consequently have ensured the invisibility or 'other' nature of females, and this primacy is perpetuated while women continue to use, unchanged, the language, which we have inherited.
>
> (12)

This kind of research is clearly interested in language as a system or structure, and thus falls under Kristeva's strictures on a potentially authoritarian linguistics. The crudely conspiratorial theory of language as 'man-made', or as a male plot against women, posits an origin (men's plotting) to language, a kind of non-linguistic transcendental signifier for which it is impossible to find any kind of theoretical support. The Researcher therefore tries to supply an alternative explanation of the well-documented instances of sexism in language.

As Michele Barrett has written: 'An analysis of gender ideology in which women are always innocent, always passive victims of patriarchal power, is patently not satisfactory' (Women's Oppression Today, 110). If we now follow Volosinov's analysis of the relationship of the class struggle to language, we will see how this analysis might be appropriated for feminist use. 'Class', Volosinov writes,

> does not coincide with the sign community, i.e. with the community, which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle.
>
> (23)

This point is crucial to a non-essentialist feminist analysis of language. It posits that we all use the same language but that we have different interests – and interests must here be

taken to mean political and power-related interests, which intersect in the sign. The meaning of the sign is thrown open – the sign becomes 'polysemic' rather than 'univocal' – and though it is true to say that the dominant power group at any given time will dominate the intertextual production of meaning, this is not to suggest that the opposition has been reduced to total silence. The power struggle intersects in the sign.

Kristeva's view of the productivity of the sign accounts for feminist discourse itself, which on a strict reading of Dale Spender's model would be impossibility. It is an effect of the dominant power relationship between the sexes. What the studies of sexism in language reveal is the past and present social-power balance between the sexes.

One specific argument within the study of sexism in language is the question of naming. Feminists have consistently argued that 'those who have the power to name the world are in a position to influence reality' (Kramarae, 165). It is argued that women lack this power and that, as a consequence, many female experiences lack a name.

Language, femininity, revolution

The acquisition of language

We have seen how Kristevan semiotics emphasizes the marginal and the heterogeneous as that which can subvert the central structures of traditional linguistics. In order to show how Kristeva can posit language as being at once structured and heterogeneous, and why this view presupposes and emphasis on language as discourse uttered by a speaking subject, it is necessary to study her theory of the acquisition of language as it appears in her monumental doctoral thesis La Revolution du langage poetique, published in Paris in 1974. The interaction between these two terms then constitutes the signifying process.

For Kristeva, significance is a question of positioning. Once the subject has entered into the Symbolic Order, the **chora** will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsional pressure on symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences in the symbolic language. The **chora** is a rhythmic pulsion rather than a new language. It constitutes, in other words, the heterogeneous, disruptive dimension of language, that which can never be caught up in the closure of traditional linguistic theory.

Kristeva is acutely aware of the contradictions involved in trying to theorize the untheorizable chora, a contradiction located at the centre of the semiotics enterprise. She writes:

> **Being, because of its explanatory metalinguistic force, an agent of social cohesion, semiotics contributes to the formation of that reassuring image which every society offers itself when it understands everything, down to and including the practices that voluntarily expend it.**
>
> ('System', 53)

It is already possible to distinguish here the theme of revolution within Kristeva's linguistic theory. Before we approach this question, however, we must take a closer look at her views of the relationship between language and femininity.

Femininity as marginality

Kristeva flatly refuses to define 'woman': 'to believe that one "is a woman" is almost as absurd and obscurantist as to believe that one "is a man", she states in an interview with women from the 'psychanalyse et politique, group published in 1974 ('La femme', 20). Though political reality (the fact that patriarchy defines women and oppresses them accordingly) still makes it necessary to campaign in the name of women, it is important to recognize that in this struggle a woman cannot be: she can only exist negatively, as it were,

through her refusal of that which is given: 'I therefore understand by "woman", she continues, 'that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies' ('La femme', 21). [Woman's time, 34]) leads her to reject any idea of an ecriture feminine or a parler femme that would be inherently feminine or female: 'Nothing in women's past or present publications seems to allow us to affirm that there is a feminine writing (ecriture feminine)', she claims in an interview published in 1977 ('A partir de', 496).

In a sense, then Kristeva does not have a theory of 'femininity', and even less of 'femaleness'. What she does have is a theory of marginality, subversion and dissidence. In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a centralized power structure. Thus Kristeva uses exactly the same terms to describe dissident intellectuals, certain avant-garde writers and the working class;

> **As long as it has not analyzed their relation to the instances of power, and has not given up the belief in its own identity, any libertarian movement (including feminism) can be recuperated by that power and by a spirituality that may be laicized or openly religious. The solution... Who knows? It will in any case pass through that with is repressed in discourse and in the relations of production. Call it 'woman' or 'oppressed classes of society'; it is the same struggle, and never the one without the other.**
>
> ('La femme', 24)

The anti-essentialist approach is carried over into her theorization of sexual difference. So far, we have seen that her theory of the constitution of the subject and the signifying process is mostly concerned with developments in the pre-Oedipal phase where sexual difference does not exist (the chora is a pre-Oedipal phenomenon). The question of difference only becomes relevant at the point of entry into the symbolic order, and Kristeva discusses the situation for little girls at this point in her book Des Chinoises (translated as About Chinese Women), published in France in the same year as La Revolution du langage poetique.

The claim advanced by the Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective (30) and Beverly Brown and Parveen Adams, thus base that Kristeva associates the semiotic with the feminine on a misreading. This fantasmatic figure, which looms as large for baby boys as for baby girls, cannot, as Brown and Adams are well aware (40), be reduced to an example of 'femininity', for the simple reason that the opposition between feminine and masculine does not exist in pre-Oedipality. And Kristeva knows this as well as anybody. As the feminine is defined as marginal under patriarchy, so the semiotic is marginal to language. This is why the two categories, along with other forms of 'dissidence', can be theorized in roughly the same way in Kristeva's work.

It is difficult, then, to maintain that Kristeva holds an essentialist or even biologistic notion of femininity. It is certainly true that she believes with Freud that the body forms the material basis for the constitution of the subject.

Kristeva's emphasis on femininity as a patriarchal construct enables feminists to counter all forms of biologistic attacks from the defenders of phallocentrism. To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine is precisely the move that enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society. A brief example will illustrate this shift from essence to position: if patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position within the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the limit or borderline of that order.

Women writing and writing about women

Towards a woman-centred perspective

It soon became evident, however, that the simplistic, undiscriminating approach of 'Images of Women' criticism was losing its inspirational force. From about 1975, interest started to focus exclusively on the works of women writers. As early as 1971, Elaine Showalter had advocated the study of women writers as a group:

> **Women writers should not be studied as a distinct group on the assumption that they write alike, or even display stylistic resemblances distinctively feminine. But women do have a special history susceptible to analysis, which includes such complex considerations as the economics of their relation to the literary marketplace; the effects of social and political changes in women's status upon individuals, and the implications of stereotypes of the woman writer and restrictions of her artistic autonomy.**

Showalter's view gradually gained acceptance. Images of Women in Fiction has two male contributors, contains more analyses of male writers than of female writers and often takes a negative attitude to works of women writers. When in that year Cheryl L. Brown and Karen Olson began to compile their anthology Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry and Prose, they felt surprised (and upset) that 'what women critics were writing about women's literature was not being published in respectable numbers and not readily accessible to concerned students and teachers' (preface, xiii). To compensate for this bias, their anthology (which remained unpublished until 1978) has no male contributors, and all its essays deal either with theoretical questions or with the work of women writers. This woman centred approach has now become the dominant trend within Anglo-American feminist criticism.

Before studying more closely the major works of this powerful 'second phase' of feminist research, it should be pointed out that not all books by women critics on women writers are examples of feminist criticism. In the early years of feminist criticism, many non-feminist works enjoyed considerable influence due to the confusion of these categories, as did for example Patricia Beer's Reader, I Married Him from 1974. In her preface, the author clearly distances herself from other writings 'on the subject of Women's Lib' (ix), since these all share a serious flaw:

> **Whatever they may claim to do, in fact they threat literature as if it were a collection of tracts into which you dip for illustrations of your own polemic, falsifying and omitting as necessary, your argument being of more moment than the other person's work of art. This rhetorical approach seems a pity as novels and plays are so much more illuminating if they are not used as a means to an end, either by writer or reader.**
>
> (ix)

If feminist criticism is a political criticism, sustained by a commitment to combat all forms of patriarchy and sexism, Patricia Beer's book is evidently not a work of feminist criticism. Positioning herself somewhere in the middle ground 'good liberal's pursue, she is neither a supporter of 'women's lib' nor an opponent of it; on the contrary, she will acknowledge a deep 'concern' both in the novel and in the 'cause of female emancipation'. This kind of 'pseudo-feminist' criticism is of no substantial interest to students of feminist approaches to literature.

In the late 1970s three major studies appeared on woman writers seen as part of a specifically female literary tradition or 'subculture': Ellen Moers, Literary Women (1976),

Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979). Taken together, these three books represent the coming-of-age of Anglo-American feminist criticism. Here at last were the long awaited major studies of women writers in British and American literary history. Competent and committed, illuminating and inspiring, these works immediately found a deservedly large and enthusiastic audience of women scholars and students. Today it is clear that the works of Moers, Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar have already taken their places among the modern classics of feminist criticism.

All three books strive to define a distinctively female tradition in literature on the grounds that, as Elaine Showalter puts it, 'the female literary tradition comes from the still-evolving relationships between women writers and their society' (12). For these critics, it is in other words society, not biology, that shapes women's different literary perception of the world. This basic similarity of approach should not, however, prevent us from noticing the often-interesting divergences and differences among these three influential works.

'Literary Woman'

Ellen Moers's Literary Women was the result of a long process of reflection on women and literature, a process that started in 1963, the year in which Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique was published, a book which brought Moers to change her views on the need to treat women writers as a separate group. The reasons for this change of heart were, first, the convincing results of such a separation, then the fact that 'we already practice a segregation of major women writers unknowingly' (xv), and, finally, a deeper understanding of the real nature of women's history. Moers thus mirrors the development of many academic women: from suspecting all attempts at segregating women from the mainstream of historical development as a form of anti-egalitarianism, they came, during the 1960s, to accept the political necessity of viewing women as a distinctive group if the common patriarchal strategy of subsuming women under the general category of 'man', and thereby silencing them, was to be efficiently counteracted.

Literary Women was the first attempt at describing the history of women's writing as a 'rapid and powerful undercurrent' (63) running under or alongside the main male tradition, and, because it mapped a relatively unknown territory for the first time, it received wide acclaim. Tillie Olsen saw Literary Women as a 'catalyst, a landmark book [which] authoritatively establishes the scope, depth, variety of literature written by women ... no one can read it unchanged'. Ellen Moers surely deserved this praise in 1977, but it is indicative of the pace with which feminist criticism has developed that the reader who picks up Literary Women in 1985 may not quite share Tillie Olsen's elation. Literary Women remains a well-written and interesting book, though at times somewhat given to sentimental hyperbole, as when Moers enthuses over George Sand and Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

> **What positively miraculous beings they were. Magnetism emanates from their life stories, some compelling power which drew the world to them – and all the goods and blessings of the kind that facilitate and ornament the woman's life in letters.**
>
> (5)

Moers sees history first and foremost as a good story, or as a compelling plot with which to identify and sympathize:

> **The main thing to change my mind about a history of literary women has been history itself, the dramatically unfolding, living literary history of the period of my work on this book. Its lesson has been that one must know the history of women to understand the history of literature.**

(xvi)

Moers's trust in conventional aesthetic and literary categories, notably her belief that we just know which writers are 'great' (the subtitle of Literary Women is 'The Great Writers'), avoid confronting the fact that the category of 'greatness' has always been an extremely contentious one for feminists, given that the criteria for 'greatness' militate heavily against the inclusion of women in the literary canon. As an overview of the field of English, American and French writing by women in the period stretching from the late-eighteenth to the twentieth century, Literary Women, with its plot summaries, emphasis on personal details and biographical anecdotes serves a useful purpose as a preliminary introduction, but it can hardly now be read as anything but a pioneer work, a stepping-stone for the more mature feminist literary histories that emerged within a year or two of its publication.

'A Literature of Their Own'

Elaine Showalter disagrees with Moers's emphasis on women's literature as an international movement 'apart from, but hardly subordinate to the mainstream: an undercurrent, rapid and powerful' (quoted in Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, 10), stressing instead, with Germaine Greer, the 'transience of female literary fame' or the fact that women writers celebrated in their own lifetimes seem to vanish without trace from the records of posterity. Showalter comments:

> **Thus each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex. Given this perpetual disruption and also the self-hatred that has alienated women writers from a sense of collective identity, it does not seem possible to speak of a 'movement'.**
>
> (11-12)
>
> **An appropriate terminology for women writers is to call these stages, Feminine, Feminist and Female.**
>
> (13)

The Feminine period starts with the appearance of male pseudonyms in the 1840s, and lasts until the death of George Eliot in 1880; the Feminist phase lasts from 1880 until 1920 and the Female phase starts in 1920 and is still continuing, though it took a new turn in the 1960s with the advent of the women's movement.

This then, is the general perspective that informs Showalter's guided tour of the female literary landscape in Britain since the 1840s. Her major contribution to literary history in general, and to feminist criticism in particular, is the emphasis she places on the rediscovery of forgotten or neglected women writers. It is in no small part due to Showalter's efforts that so many hitherto unknown women writers are beginning to receive the recognition they deserve; A Literature of Their Own is a veritable goldmine of information about the lesser-known literary women of the period. Since Showalter, as opposed to Moers and Gilbert and Gubar, has also written several articles on the theory of feminist criticism, the Researcher has found it unnecessary to elucidate further the theoretical implications of her practice of criticism in A Literature of Their Own.

Rescuing Woolf for feminist politics: Some points towards an alternative reading

So far, we have discussed some aspects of the crypto-Lukacsian perspective implicit in much contemporary feminist criticism. The major drawback of this approach is surely signalled in the fact that it proves incapable of appropriating for feminism the work of the greatest British woman writer of this century, despite the fact that Woolf was not only a

novelist of considerable genius but a declared feminist and dedicated reader of other women's writings. It is surely arguable, that if feminist critics cannot produce a positive political and literary assessment of Woolf's writing, then the fault may lie with their own critical and theoretical perspectives rather than with Woolf's texts. But do feminists have an alternative to this negative reading of Woolf? Let us see if a different theoretical approach might rescue Virginia Woolf for feminist politics.

But Woolf does more than practice a non-essentialist form of writing. She also reveals a deeply sceptical attitude to the male- humanist concept of an essential human identity. For what can this self-identical identity be if all meaning is a ceaseless play of difference, if absence as much as presence is the foundation of meaning? The humanist concept of identity is also challenged by psychoanalytic theory, which Woolf undoubtedly knew.

For Woolf, as for Freud, unconscious drives and desires constantly exert a pressure on our conscious thoughts and actions. For psychoanalysis the human subject is a complex entity, of which the conscious mind is only a small part. If a similar approach is taken to the literary text, it follows that the search for unified individual self, or gender identity or indeed 'textual identity' in the literary work must be seen as drastically reductive.

The French feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva has argued, that the modernist poetry of Lautreamont, Mallarme and others constitutes a 'revolutionary' form of writing. Since Kristeva sees such conventional meaning as the structure that sustains the whole of the symbolic order- that is, all human social and cultural institutions – the fragmentation of symbolic language in modernist poetry comes for her, to parallel and prefigure a total social revolution.

Kristeva also argues that many women will be able to let what she calls the 'spasmodic force' of the unconscious disrupt their language because of their strong links with the pre-Oedipal mother figure. But if these unconscious pulsations were to take over the subject entirely, the subject would fall back into pre-Oedipal or imaginary chaos and develop some form of mental illness. The subject whose language lets such forces disrupt the symbolic order, in other words, is also the subject who runs the greater risk of lapsing into madness.

It is evident that for Julia Kristeva it is not the biological sex of a person, but the subject position she or he takes up, that determines their revolutionary potential. Her views of feminist politics reflect this refusal of biologism and essentialism. The feminist struggle, she argues, must be seen historically and politically as a three-tiered one, which can be schematically summarized as follows:

1 Women demand equal access to the symbolic order.
  Liberal feminism. Equality.
2 Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.
3 (This is Kristeva's own position.) Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical.

The third position is one that has deconstructed the opposition between masculinity and femininity, and therefore necessarily challenges the very notion of identity. Kristeva writes:

In the third attitude, which I strongly advocate – which I imagine? – The very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics. What can 'identity', even 'sexual identity', mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?

('Women's time', 33-4)

For it still remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women, in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women. But an

undeconstructed' form of 'stage two' feminism, unaware of the metaphysical nature of gender identities, runs the risk of becoming an inverted form of sexism. It does so by uncritically taking over the very metaphysical categories set up by patriarchy in order to keep women in their places, despite attempts to attach new feminist values to these old categories. An adoption of Kristeva's 'deconstructed' form of feminism therefore in one sense leaves everything as it was – our positions in the political struggle have not changed – but another sense radically transforms our awareness of the nature of that struggle.

Here, the Researcher feels Kristeva's feminism echoes the position taken up by Virginia Woolf some sixty years earlier. Read from this perspective, To the Lighthouse illustrates the destructive nature of a metaphysical belief in strong, immutably fixed gender identities – as represented by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay –whereas Lily Briscoe (an artist) represents the subject who deconstructs this opposition, perceives its pernicious influence and tries as far as is possible in a still rigidly patriarchal order to live as her own woman, without regard for the crippling definitions of sexual identity to which society would have her conform.

In her fascinating book Toward Androgyny, published in 1973, Carolyn Heilbrun sets out her won definition of androgyny in similar terms when she describes it as the concept of an 'unbounded and hence fundamentally indefinable nature' (xi). When she later finds it necessary to distinguish androgyny from feminism, and therefore implicitly defines Woolf as a non-feminist, her distinction seems to be based on the belief that only the first two stages of Kristeva's three-tiered struggle could count as feminist strategies. As opposed to Heilbrun, the Researcher would stress with Kristeva that a theory that demands the deconstruction of sexual identity is indeed authentically feminist. In Woolf's case the question is indeed authentically feminist. In Woolf's case the question is rather whether or not her remarkably advanced understanding of feminist objectives prevented her from taking up a progressive political position in the feminist struggles of her day.

The host of critics who with Marder read Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway as Woolf's ideal of feminity, are thus either betraying their vestigial sexism - the sexes are fundamentally different and should stay that way – or their adherence to what Kristeva would call a 'stage two' feminism: women are different from men and it is time they began praising the superiority of their sex. These are both, the Researcher believes, misreadings of Woolf's texts, as when Kate Millett writes that:

> **Virginia Woolf glorified too housewives, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, recorded the suicidal misery of Rhoda in The Waves without ever explaining its causes, and was argumentative yet somehow unsuccessful, perhaps because unconvinced, in conveying the frustrations of the woman artist in Lily Briscoe.**
> (139-40)

A combination of Derridean and Kristevan theory, then, would seem to hold considerable promise for future feminist readings of Woolf. The strength of Kristevan theory lies in its emphasis on the politics of language as a material and social structure, but it takes little or no account of other conflicting ideological and material structures that must be part of any radical social transformation.

A Marxist-feminist critic like Michele Barrett, has stressed the materialist aspect of Woolf's politics. In her introduction to Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, she argues that:

> Virginia Woolf's critical essays offer us an unparalleled account of the development of women's writing, perceptive discussion of her predecessors and contemporaries, and a pertinent insistence on the material conditions which have structured women's

consciousness.

(36)

A Kristevan approach to Woolf, as the Researcher has argued, would refuse to accept this binary opposition of aesthetics on the one hand and politics on the other, locating the politics of Woolf's writing precisely in her textual practice. That practice is of course much more marked in the novels than in most of the essays.

Writing, for Virginia Woolf, was revolutionary act. Her alienation from British patriarchal culture and its capitalist and imperialist forms and values, was so intense that she was filled with terror and determination as she wrote. A guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt, she trembled with fear as she prepared her attacks, her raids on the enemy.

(I)

We have seen that current Anglo-American feminist criticism tends to read Woolf through traditional aesthetic categories, relying largely on a liberal-humanist version of the Lukacsian aesthetics, against which Brecht so effectively polemicized. The anti-humanist reading the Researcher has advocated as yielding a better understanding of the political nature of Woolf's aesthetics has yet to be written. Meisel is the only critic of the Researcher's acquaintance (thought wise) to have grasped the radically deconstructed character of Woolf's texts:

With 'difference', the reigning principle in Woolf as well as Pater, there can be no natural or inherent characteristics of any kind, even between the sexes, because all character, all language, even the language of sexuality, emerges by means of a difference from itself.

(234)

The only difference between a feminist and a non-feminist critic in this tradition then becomes the formal political perspective of the critic. The feminist critic thus unwittingly puts Virginia Woolf as the progressive, feminist writer of genius she undoubtedly was. A feminist criticism that would do both justice and homage to its great mother and sister: this surely, should be our goal.

From Existentialism to the Second Sex*

With respect to the feminine condition, the theoretical presuppositions of Being and Nothingness seemed in total opposition to the observations and claims of The Second Sex. All the same, Simone de Beauvoir forced existentialism to 'think beyond its means'.

For the present-day feminist reader, looking for elements of reflection capable of sustaining practice, The Second Sex is a very curious blend. [...] In this work one finds a number of observations, descriptions, and analyses, which, personally speaking, the Researcher cannot but endorse.

Well! Is it necessary to resort to concepts such as these to provide evidence of women's oppression? What happens if one cannot find meaning in these categories? Strategically, isn't it risky to hitch a study of oppression to such considerations?

This gesture undoubtedly goes automatically to the relational level-here one finds a stereotype of philosophical liason. But this is not essential from a theoretical point of view. To be convinced, it is sufficient to pin down two aspects of Sartrism available in 1948 in the existentialist framework. On the one hand no oppression can be thematized, that of women no more than any other. On the other hand a terrifying relationship of men with women's bodies is expressed there, which establishes an ontologico-carnal hierarchy between 'the masculine' and 'the feminine'.

The Bad Faith of the Oppressed

The ethics of authenticity, denies the power of social or historical determinations in favour of a traditional form of voluntarism. 'Constraint cannot have any hold on liberty'. Bad faith consists in refusing to identify oneself as a free subject and pretending that one is determined by external circumstances. Such a position includes some delicious corollaries:

1. 'It is insane to think of complaining, since nothing from outside has decided what we feel, how we live, or what we are... Isn't it I myself who decides the co-efficient of the adversity of things?'
2. Revolutionaries are materialist and serious but of bad faith, for they appreciate man's situation in the world, to which they attribute more reality than their Selves. The main figure of this bad faith is Marx.
3. Every feeling of inferiority stems from a free choice. 'It depends on us to choose to regard ourselves as great and noble or low and humiliated.' Of course, it is not by a free decree that one chooses to be or not to be a Michelangelo.
4. Frigid women suffer form pathological bad faith. They try to deny their pleasure. It is they who have decided to be frigid, but they hide the deliberated form of their attitude by declaring 'I am frigid', not: 'I have decided to mask my pleasure.'

To use the doctrine of authenticity to describe women's oppression is already paradoxical. But the most dramatic aspects remain to be seen.

Of Language and the Flesh...

The first thing that strikes the careless observer is that women are unlike men. They are "the opposite sex" (though why "opposite" I do not know; what is the "neighboring sex"?). But the fundamental thing is that women are more like men than anything else in the world.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS
'THE HUMAN-NOT-QUITE-HUMAN'

An interpretive chasm separates two interpretations, fifty years apart, of the same story of death and desire, told by an eighteenth-century physician, obsessed with the problem of distinguishing real from apparent death.

When time for burial came, indeed just as the coffin bearing the dead girl was being lowered into the ground, someone felt movement coming from the inside. The lid was torn off; the girl began to stir and soon recovered from what proved not to have been real death at all but only a coma. Needless to say, the parents were overjoyed to have their daughter back,

although their pleasure was severely diminished by the discovery that she was pregnant and, moreover, could give no satisfactory account of how she had come to be that way. In their embarrassment, the innkeepers consigned the daughter to a convent as soon as her baby was born.

The moral that Jacques-Jean Bruhier asks his readers to draw form this story is that only scientific test can make certain that a person is really dead and that even very intimate contact with a body leaves room for mistakes. But Bruhier's contemporary, the noted surgeon Antoine Louis, came to a very different conclusion, one more germane to the subject of this book, when he analyzed the case in 1752. Based on the evidence that Bruhier himself offered, Louis argues, no one could have doubted that the girl was not dead: she did not, as the young monk testified, look dead and moreover who knows if she did not give some "demonstrative signs" in proof of her liveliness, signs that any eighteenth-century doctor or even layperson would have expected in the circumstances.

The girl *must* have shuddered, just a bit. If not her rosy cheeks then the tremors of venereal orgasm would have given her away. Bruhier's story was thus one of frauds and not of apparent death; the innkeepers' daughter and the monk simply conspired, Louis concludes, to escape culpability by feigning coma until the last possible moment before burial.

This reorientation applied in principle to the sexual functioning of both men and women. Not so for women. The purported independence of generation from pleasure, created the space in which women's sexual nature could be redefined, debated, denied, or qualified. The commonplace of much contemporary psychology-that men want sex while women want relationships-is the precise inversion of pre-Enlightenment notions that, extending back to antiquity, equated friendship with men and fleshliness with women. When, in the late eighteenth century, it became a possibility that "the majority of women are not much troubled with sexual feelings," the presence or absence of orgasm became a biological signpost of sexual difference.

The new conceptualization of female orgasm, however, was but one formulation of a more radical eighteenth-century reinterpretation of the female body in relation to the male. Indeed, doggerel verse of the early nineteenth century still sings of these hoary homologies long after they had disappeared from learned texts:

Though they of different sexes be,

Yet on the whole they are the same as we,

For those that have the strictest searchers been,

Find women are but men turned outside in.

In this world, the vagina is imagined as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles. The learned Galen could cite the dissections of the Alexandrian anatomist Herophilus, in the third century B.C., to support his claim that a woman has testes with accompanying seminal ducts very much like the man's, one on each side of the uterus, the only difference being that the male's are contained in the scrotum and the female's are not. Language marks this view of sexual difference.

By around 1800, writers of all sorts were determined to base what they insisted were fundamental differences between the male and female sexes, and thus between man and woman, on discoverable biological distinctions and to express these in a radically different rhetoric. In 1803, for example, Jacques-Louis Moreau, one of the founders of "moral

anthropology," argued passionately against the nonsense written by Aristotle, Galen, and their modern followers on the subject of women in relation to men. An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man.

Sexual difference in kind, not degree, seemed solidly grounded in nature. Patrick Geddes, a prominent professor of biology as well as a town planner and writer on a wide range of social issues, used cellular physiology to explain the "fact" that women were "more passive, conservative, sluggish and stable" than men, while men were "more active, energetic, eager, passionate, and variable."

The dominant, though by no means universal, view since the eighteenth century has been that there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these "facts." Biology-the stable, ahistorical, sexed body-is understood to be the epistemic foundation for prescriptive claims about the social order.

Girls could turn into boys, and men who associated too extensively with women, could lose the hardness and definition of their more perfect bodies and regress into effeminacy.

This, however, is an unconscionably external, ahistorical, and impoverished approach to a vast and complex literature about the body and culture. The Researcher wants to propose instead that in these pre-Enlightenment texts, and even some later ones, sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while gender, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or "real." Gender-man and woman-mattered a great deal and was part of the order things; sex was conventional, though modern terminology makes such a reordering nonsensical. In the world of one sex, it was precisely when talk seemed to be most directly about the biology of two sexes that it was most embedded in the politics of gender, in culture. To be a man or a woman, was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to be organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes.

How did the change from what the Researcher has called a one-sex/flesh model to a two-sex/flesh model take place? Why, to take the most specific case first, did sexual arousal and its fulfillment- specifically female sexual arousal- become irrelevant to an understanding of conception?

But in fact no such discoveries took place. Scientific advances do not entail the demotion of female orgasm. True, by the 1840s it had become clear that, at least in dogs, ovulation could occur without coition and thus presumably without orgasm. And it was immediately postulated that the human female, like the canine bitch, was a "spontaneous ovulator," producing an egg during the periodic heat that in women was known as the menses.

Moreover, what evidence there does exist for biological difference with a gendered behavioral result is either highly suspect for a variety of methodological reasons, or ambiguous, or proof of Doronthy Sayers' notion that men and women are very close neighbors indeed if it is proof of anything at all.

It was not, for example, until 1759 that anyone bothered to reproduce a detailed female skeleton in an anatomy book to illustrate its difference from the male. Up to this time there had been one basic structure for the human body, and that structure was male. And when differences were discovered they were already, in the very form of their representation, deeply marked by the power politics of gender.

Politics, broadly understood as the competition for power, generates new ways of constituting the subject and the social realities within which humans dwell. "Society," writes Maurice Godelier, "haunts the body's sexuality".

More generally, biology and human sexual experience mirrored the metaphysical reality on which, it was thought, the social order rested. The new biology, with its search for

fundamental differences between the sexes, of which the tortured questioning of the very existence of women's sexual pleasure was a part, emerged at precisely the time when the foundations of the old social order were shaken once and for all.

This book, then, is about the making not of gender, but of sex. The Researcher has no interest in denying the reality of sex or of sexual dimorphism as an evolutionary process. But the Researcher wants to show on the basis of historical evidence, that almost everything one wants to say about sex-however sex is understood-already has in it a claim about gender. Sex, in both the one-sex and the two-sex worlds, is situational; it is explicable only within the context of battles over gender and power.

To a great extent the Researcher's research and feminist scholarship in general are inextricably caught in the tensions of this formulation: between language on the one hand and extralinguistic reality on the other; between nature and culture; between "biological sex" and the endless social and political markers of difference. The analytical distinction between sex and gender gives voice to these alternatives and has always been precarious. In addition to those who would eliminate gender by arguing that so-called cultural difference are really natural, there has been a powerful tendency among feminists to empty sex of its content by arguing, conversely, that natural differences are really cultural. Already by 1975, in Gayle Rubin's classic account of how a social sex/gender system "transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity," the presense of the body is so veiled as to be almost hidden. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead further erode the body's priority over language with theory self-conscious use of quotation marks around "givens" in the claim that what gender is, what men and women are... do not simply reflect or elaborate upon biological 'givens' but are largely products of social and cultural processes." "It is also dangerous to place the body at the center of a search for female identity", reads, French feminist manifesto.

But if not the body, then what? (The deconstruction of stable meaning in texts can be regarded as the general case of the deconstruction of sexual difference: "what can 'identity', even 'sexual identity', mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged? " writes Julia Kristeva.) Gender to Joan Scott, for example, is not a category that mediates between fixed biological differences on the one hand and historically contingent social relations on the other. Rather it includes both biology and society: "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes... a primary way of signifying relationships of power."

But, feminist do not need french philosophy to repudiate the sex/gender distinction. For quite different reasons, Catharine MacKinnon argues explicitly that gender is the division of men and women caused "by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalize male sexual dominance and female sexual submission"; sex-which comes to the same thing –is social relations "organized so that men may dominate and women must submit."

Finally, from a different philosophical perspective, Foucault has even further rendered problematic the nature of human sexuality in relation to the body. Sexuality is not, he argues, an inherent quality of the flesh that various societies extol or repress-not, as Freud would seem to have it, a biological drive that civilization channels in one direction or another. 'Sexuality' as a singular and all-important human attribute with a specific object – the opposite sex – is the product of the late eighteenth century. Rather, like the whole world for Nietzsche (the great philosophical influence on Foucault), sexuality is "a sort of artwork."

The body reappears even in the writings of those who would turn attention to language, power, and culture. (Foucault, for example, longs for a nonconstructed utopian space in the flesh from which to undermine "bio-power": "the rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures".

Body as cultural construct met body on the dissecting table; more or less schematic anatomical illustrations – the most accurate modern science had to offer- rather hopelessly confronted the actual tangles of the human neck. For all of the Researcher's awareness of how deeply our understanding of what we saw was historically contingent-the product of institutional, political, and epistemological contingencies –the flesh in its simplicity seemed always to shine through.

There are less personal reasons as well for wanting to maintain in the Researcher's writing, a distinction between the body and the body as discursively constituted, between seeing and seeing-as. It is also disingenuous to write a history of sexual difference, or difference generally, without acknowledging the shameful correspondence between particular forms of suffering and particular forms of the body, however the body is understood.

Far from denying any of this, the Researcher wants to insist upon it. Her particular Archimedean point, however, is not in the real transcultural body but rather in the space between it and its representations. The Researcher hold up the history of progress in reproductive physiology-the discovery of distinct germ products, for example-to demonstrate that these did not cause a particular understanding of sexual difference, the shift to the two-sex model. Anatomists might have seen bodies' differently-they might, for example, have regarded the vagina, as other than a penis-but they did not do so for essentially cultural reasons. Similarly, empirical data were ignored-evidence for conception without orgasm, for example-because they did not fit into either a scientific or a metaphysical paradigm.

Sex, like being human, is contextual. And the Researcher would here go further and add that the private, enclosed, stable body that seems to lie at the basis of modern notions of sexual difference is also the product of particular, historical, cultural moments. It too, like opposite sexes, comes into and out of focus.

Science does not simply investigate, but itself constitutes, the difference that the Researcher's chapter explores: that of woman from man. (But not, for reasons discussed below, man from woman.)

Not only do attitudes toward sexual difference "generate and structure literary texts"; texts generate sexual difference.

Johnson is careful to restrict the problem of sexuality to "us speaking animals," and thus to rest content that, among dumb animals and even among humans outside the symbolic realm, male is manifestly the opposite sex from female. But clarity among the beasts bespeaks only the very limited purposes for which we generally make such sexual distinctions. It matters little if the genitals of the female elephant (fig.1) are rendered to look like a penis because the sex of elephants generally matters little to us; it is remarkable and shocking if the same trick is played on our species, as was routine in Renaissance illustrations. Moreover, as



soon as animals enter some discourse outside breeding, zoo keeping, or similarly circumscribed contexts, the same sort of ambiguities arise as when we speak about humans. Darwin in 1861 lamented: "We do not even know in the least the final cause of sexuality; why

new beings should be produced by the union of the two sexual elements, instead of by a process of parthenogenesis...The whole subject is as yet hidden in darkness." And still today, the question of why egg and sperm should be borne by different, rather than the same, hermaphroditic, creature remains open.

Darkness deepens when animals enter into the orbit of culture; their sexual transparency disappears. The hare, which figures prominently in so much myth and folklore, was long thought to be capable of routine sex change from year to year and thus inherently androgynous. Or, as the more leaned would have it, the male hare bears young on occasion.

It should be clear by now that the Researcher offers no answer to the question how bodies determine what we mean by sexual difference or sameness. Some claims are positive: she points to ways in which the biology of sexual difference is embedded in other cultural programs.

Now the Researcher desires to discuss about the oxymoronic one-sex body. Here the boundaries between male and female are primarily political; rhetorical rather than biological claims regarding sexual difference and sexual desire being primary. It is about a body whose fluids-blood, semen, milk, and the various excrements-are fungible in that they turn into one another and whose processes- digestion and generation, menstruation and other bleeding-are not so easily distinguished or so easily assignable to one sex or another as they became after the eighteenth century. The question for the classical model is not what it explicitly claims-why woman? -But the more troublesome question-why man?

It also concentrates on the cultural interests, that various writers had in what seems to us a manifestly counterintuitive model of sexual difference. It exposes the immense pressure on the one-sex model from the existence of two genders, from the new political claims of women, and from the claims of heterosexuality generally. The Researcher here suggests so through readings of legal, juridical, and literary texts that it is sustained by powerful notions of how hierarchy worked and how the body expresses its cultural meanings.

The Researcher also gives an account of the breakdown of the one-sex model and the establishment of two sexes. She maintains that these constructions were not the consequence of scientific change but rather of an epistemological and a social-political revolution. More detailed studies are needed to create a locally nuanced account of "Politics, Culture, and Class in the Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Body."

The Researcher also attempts to engage the science of sex-two this time-with the demands of culture. She shows specifically, how cornerstones of corporeally based sexes were themselves deeply implicated in the politics of gender. The specter of one-sex remains: the "womanliness of woman" struggles against "the anarchic assertors of the manliness of woman."

The Researcher has not written this section of the chapter as an explicit attack on the current claims of sociobiology. But she hopes it is taken up by those engaged in that debate. The fact that the giants of Renaissance anatomy persisted in seeing the vagina as an internal version of the penis, suggests that almost any sign of difference is dependent on an underlying theory of, or context for, deciding what counts and what does not count as evidence.

More important, though, the Researcher hopes this section will persuade the reader that there is no "correct" representation of woman in relation to men and that the whole science of difference is thus misconceived. It is true that there is and was considerable and often overtly misogynist bias in much biological research on women; clearly science has historically worked to "rationalize and legitimize" distinctions not only of sex but also of race and class, to the disadvantage of the powerless.

The Researcher returns again and again in this section to a problematic, unstable female body that is either a version of or wholly different form a generally unproblematic,

stable male body. As feminist scholars have made abundantly clear, it is always woman's sexuality that is being constituted; woman is the empty category. Woman alone seems to have "gender" since the category itself is defined as that aspect of social relations based on difference between sexes in which the standard has always been man.

But the modern reader must always be aware that recounting the history of interpreting woman's body is not to grant the male body the authority it implicitly claims. The record on which the Researcher has relied bears witness to the fundamental incoherence of stable, fixed categories of sexual dimorphism, of male and/or female.

Although some tensions inform this section, others do not. The Researcher has given relatively little attention to conflicting ideas about the nature of woman or of human sexuality.

Finally, the Researcher confesses that she is saddened by the most obvious and persistent omission in this section of the chapter: a sustained account of experience in the body. Some might argue that this is as it should be, and that a man has nothing of great interest or authenticity to say about the sexual female body as it feels and loves.

What is sexist language?

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF GENDER FREE LANGUAGE

Language is not simply used for the communication of ideas, but also for the creation and maintenance of an environment for effective communication between any groups of people. Discrimination in language–whether conscious – has direct implications for equal opportunities practice in all aspects of education, by alienating and offending certain members of a community. Sexist language is any item of language, which, through its structure or use, constitutes a male-as-norm view of society by trivializing, insulting or rendering women invisible. It can also be seen as language, which makes an unnecessary and irrelevant reference to a person's sex or gender. Sexist language tends to fall into the following groups.

ADDRESS:

There are a number of terms of address which may irritate women and which may signal that they are not being taken seriously by the addresser:

X Mr./Mrs./Miss.: avoid using these three titles only as women may feel irritated by having to reveal marital status when the same is not expected of men.

- Unless a preference is stated, use parallel terms such as Mr. and Ms or offer a choice of Ms as an option. e.g. Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss.

X 'Virginia Woolf and Dickens', (when referring to Woolf and Dickens): avoid using first names for women and second names for men; this suggests that women are being treated in a discriminatory fashion.

- Use parallel terms when addressing women and men, whether for writers, students or colleagues: 'Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens', Susan Coles and David Shepherd' or 'Ms Coles and Mr. Shepherd.' Use a woman's first name rather than her husband's i.e. Ms Gill Spencer, rather than Mrs. David Spencer.

GENERICS:

The terms **he** and **man** are frequently used as so-called 'generic' terms, as in the following examples: "You must know your client's circumstances before you give him advice"; "Man is the most intelligent of the species"; and "TV Street paved with gold for admen". Empirical research shows that these 'generics are generally understood as gender specific terms, in that they trigger images of male referents alone. This use may confuse rather than clarify.

X "You must know your client's circumstances before you give him advice." Avoid making assumptions about a person's gender. Use he/him/his for gender-specific reference only. For generic reference (as above) the following strategies are possible:

- Change the form of the sentence to plural or passive: "You must know your clients' circumstances before you give them advice" or "A client's circumstances must be known before advice is given."
- Use one of the following as a singular generic pronoun: s/he, she or he, they or she (as a form of positive discrimination). "You must know your client's circumstances before you give him/her advice," or "You must know... before you give them advice."

X "Man is the most intelligent of the species"; avoid the use of man to refer to people in general as it excludes woman from the reference.

- Choose neutral alternatives such as humanity, humans, people: "Humans are the most intelligent of the species."

X 'Give our policemen, the officers they deserve"; avoid this use of man in compound nouns, as it implies that the group is exclusively male.

- Use a noun phrase without man; "Give our police the officers they deserve." Neutral alternatives can be found for most examples, such as 'fire fighters', 'sales staff' and 'reporters' for firemen', 'salesmen and 'newsmen'.

DEROGATORY/PATRONIZING TERMS:

There are a number of terms frequently used to address groups of women, such as girls', which many people find patronizing. Other terms, 'authoress' for example, which describe women in professional roles, suggest a lack of seriousness and carry the assumption that women are an exception to the male norm: "MacEnroe is one of the best tennis players in the world today, and Navratilova is one of the best women players."

X 'Hostess', 'lady poet', 'female scientist' and 'madam chairman'; avoid affixes which mark for female gender as they may lend an air of amateurism. Even with the more acceptable affix of 'woman', it is often the case that the female gender is marked but not the male, as in 'woman doctor', not 'male doctor'.

- Use terms, which do not make gender distinctions. Thus 'poet', 'doctor', 'chair/chairperson' and 'scientist should be used as terms which include females and males. Where it is necessary to mark gender (and there are remarkably few cases where this is necessary) the affixes female' and 'male' should be used equally' 'MacEnroe is one of the best male tennis players in the world today, Novratilova is one of the best female players."

STEREOTYPING:

Within the university setting, there are many situations where sexist language may appear: in verbal interactions during meetings, lectures, or informal conversations between colleagues and students and in written form, such as formal university documents, memos and handouts. Some of these may draw on male oriented experience and stereotypical female and male roles.

X "John played football" (an example commonly given in linguistics): avoid the use of examples, which exclusively draw on male-oriented experience, or which present males as the norm. Also avoid making assumptions or selecting examples which draw on stereotypical roles for women and men: secretary as 'she' and engineer as 'he'.

- Use female names and females in roles as frequently as male names/roles; "Alice went to the cinema" should be used as frequently as "Paul went to the cinema".

- Where possible use generic examples, thus avoiding stereotypical roles: "Carla went to the cinema" not "Carla did the washing up"

WHY USE GENDER-FREE LANGUAGE?

The conscious adoption of a gender free policy in all aspects of university life can bring positive results in the way that members of a community respond within any communicative situation. Far from being a form of censorship, gender-free language shows that a conscious choice has been made to include all potential addressees and acknowledge everyone on an equal basis through the language used. Administrators, teaching staff and students can thus be assured that the university is not the male domain that it many appear to be and women no longer its prisoners, either of the four walls or the text.

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CHECKLIST

- Use parallel terms when addressing females; 'Mr and Ms', 'Liz Lochhead and James Kelman'.
- Use he/him/his as gender-specific terms only; 'When Bill eventually arrived, he was over on hour late".
- Use s/he, he or she, she or they, as generic pronouns; "You must know your client's circumstances before you give her/him advice".
- Use neutral terms in generic compound nouns; 'fire-fighter', 'home-worker', 'business person', 'spokesperson'.
- Use neutral terms for females and males, thus avoiding gender distinctions, 'writer', actor', 'chair'.
- Use marked terms equally (and only when absolutely necessary); 'female engineer/male engineer', 'female doctor/male doctor'.
- Draw on both female and male experience when citing examples; use generic examples thus avoiding stereotypical roles; "Alice drove to work," rather than "Alice washed the dishes."

Pronote

Semiology or Semiotics has become quite popular in the feminist criticism today, because of its ability to unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women in both language and cultural forms. Drawing on various references in the language and linguistics was not easy for the Researcher to get acquainted with, especially since the relevant authors of her study contextually differ in their interpretations and often write in an extremely abstract manner. The purpose of this research is therefore, not so much to explain the intricacies of the field of language as it to show what semiotics or deconstruction can do in terms of analyzing women, their status as writer and the varied meanings associated with them, when implied. The conclusion here is an answer to the hypotheses developed by the Researcher all through the research, which is of redefining women as a human being, as a writer through the deconstruction of language. The analysis also involves the portrayal of women, may it be in literature or media. In order to understand how a typical semiotic analysis is conducted, it is necessary to take a closer look at the key concepts involved. According to de Saussure, who looked at language primarily, a sign consists of two elements. Its physical appearance in, for instance, a combination of letters forming the word 'rain' is called the 'signifier', whereas the concept is refers to –a particular type of weather is called the 'signified'. In the case of women, the relation between signifier and signified is completely arbitrary and based on convention rather than a self-evident relationship, which is why the Researcher felt an urgent necessity of conducting a research in this arena, seldom considered important or that which deserves attention.

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Chapter–5
Conclusion

Feminism and the power of interpretation: Some Critical Observations

Recognizing that women have long been held prisoners of male texts, genres, and canons, many feminist critics have argued for the necessity of constructing a theory of the female reader and have offered a variety of strategies by which she may elude her captors. Thus, the Researcher like Judith Fetterley, urges women to become "resisting readers" of man's texts so that they "will lose their power to bind us unknowingly to their designs."[196] And in an article on women's autobiographies, Nancy Miller argues that we should develop a way of reading women's writings that deliberately transgresses generic boundaries, since "not to perform an expanded reading is to remain prisoner of a canon that bars women from their own texts."[197]

For Fetterley and Miller, the issue of power seems to be a crucial stake in developing a feminist reader-centred theory: hitherto men have had the power to direct and control women's literary response, and it now becomes imperative for female prisoners of male texts to refuse to exhibit the good behavior that has rendered them docile and model readers.

Unfortunately, it seems to the Researcher that for a variety of complex reasons, feminist criticism is in danger of losing some of its political edge and of forgetting the important stakes of a feminist theory of the reader. In this conclusion, she has thus attempted to examine some readings that have been proposed as models for the process of "reading as a woman" to show how the force of the feminist critique has been weakened, as well as how women are being negated once again by a new universalizing practice that denies the specificity of their encounters with literary texts-a theme/hypotheses central to her theses that is rightly proved.

As Kolodny admits, pluralism and feminism would seem to be somewhat antagonistic, since pluralism rests on what Gayatri Spivak has called "an ideology of free enterprise at work." Whereas the pluralist tends to ignore or minimize the constraints on the individual's freedom, feminism, of course, stresses the way in which women's freedom has been curtailed, their right to choose severely restricted.

Quite the contrary, the feminist critique inevitably calls into question the "dog-eared myth of intellectual neutrality" and "exposes the minefield for what it is: the male fear of sharing power and significance with women" (p. 21-22).

Kolodny proceeds to attribute men's "incapacity ... to properly interpret and appreciate women's texts" to a "lack of prior acquaintance" (p. 12). But, we are told, men will be "better readers or appreciators of women's texts when they have read more of them," just as "women have always been taught to become astute readers of man's texts" (p. 14-15).

In her desire, prematurely to include men in the feminist reading process, Kolodny underestimates the most crucial factor in men's traditional disregard and contempt for women's writings and women's modes of existence: the reality of male power. This fact of power renders asymmetrical the process by which men and women acquire competency to

196 Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. xxiii.

197 Nancy K. Miller, "Women's Autobiography in France: For a Dialectics of Identification," in Women and Language in Literature and Society, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 270.

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read each other's texts and guarantees that the majority of men will not gradually become "appreciators" of women's texts, since there is no compelling reason for them to begin to be interested in what women have to say (unless, as we shall see, they want to appropriate woman's discourse) Speaking of men's putative physiological inability to fake orgasm, Catharine MacKinnon once remarked that if women had men's power, men would find a way to fake it.[198]

In her essay "Turning the Lens on 'The Panther Captivity': A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism", written for the influential issue of Critical Inquiry entitled Writing and Sexual Difference, Kolodny provides us with an extremely interesting reading of an early American captivity narrative in order to show how a woman reading a literary text from a feminist perspective can expand upon traditional interpretations of that text. In her introductory remarks, she is careful to forestall any potential charges of feminist criticism's castrating powers: "Because feminist criticism essentially adds a vital new perspective to all that has gone before, rather than taking anything away, it enjoys at least the possibility of enhancing and enlarging our appreciation of what is comprised by any specific literary text."[199] But suppose for a moment that we turn the lens on Kolodny's reading of this text, and propose it as an allegory of feminist criticism in the wilderness, to borrow a phrase from Elaine Showalter, who borrows it from Geoffrey Hartman.[200] Hitherto, as we know, criticism has been largely an all-male preserve, jealously guarded from the possible intrusions of the feminist critic.

But, as Kolodny's reading of "The Panther Captivity" indicates, even that may be asking too much. For, it must be remembered, at the same time that the story assuages male fears about women's existence in the wilderness, it takes pains to eradicate that existence, so that men once more retain sole possession of both women and the wilderness.

If patriarchy entails male dominance, and if Kolodny is correct about the male critic's "fear of sharing power and significance with women," then a reading of a text that reveals the significance of the woman's point of view will certainly not alleviate this fear. The heroine of "The Panther Captivity" may be considered a monitory figure for the feminist critic, who, despite her protestations to the contrary, remains "captive," – if not of a particular male methodology, then of masculine criticism in general.

If a pluralist critic such as Kolodny claims too little for feminist criticism, and tends to downplay the issue of male power, such would seem not to be the case with the criticism influenced by French feminism. Whereas Kolodny, for example, never questions the fact that the aim of criticism is to produce interpretations of literary texts, French feminism often goes as far as to consider the act of interpretation itself to be a patriarchal enterprise, the goal of which is to achieve power and mastery over a given text.

In this theoretical schema, the text-writing in general-is identified with femininity, and interpretation becomes a means of arresting the free play of meaning analogous to the

198 Catharine MacKinnon, lecture at the Conference on Culture Studies, University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana, July 10, 1983. See the essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," in Displacement: Derrida and After, *ed.* Mark Krupnick (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1983), for a different use of the metaphor of female orgasm to describe a possible activity of reading.

199 Annette Kolodny, "Turning the Lens on 'The Panther Captivity': A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism," in Writing and Sexual Difference, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 159.

200 See Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in Abel, Writing and Sexual Difference, pp. 9-35.

way patriarchy continually attempts to contain women and women's sexuality.

For example, Caren Greenberg says of Oedipal literary criticism, "Woman is the text in the Oedipus myth, and if we pursue the analogy, the fate of the text (and therefore of language) in the Oedipal reading process parallels the fate of women in the patriarchy: both are without intrinsic value and gain importance only to the extent that they signify something other than themselves,"[201] Greenberg's essay "Reading Reading: Echo's Abduction of Language" proposes an alternate myth meant to rescue simultaneously the text the female from the male reader's will to dominance.

As ingenious as this reading of the myth certainly is, Greenberg exhibits a disregard for the text that is astonishing in light of her indictment of Oedipal criticism's textual blindness. Male author and female reader here collaborate to the ultimate benefit to patriarchy.[202] It is precisely this concord that the Researcher here like Judith Fetterley tries to break in urging women to become "resisting readers." Her second allegory of feminist criticism, then, would identify Echo as the feminist critic who holds "desire" and power to be mutually exclusive for women.

To the Researcher's mind, there is something profoundly depressing in the spectacle of female critics' avowing their eagerness to relinquish a mastery that they have never possessed.

Greenberg's essay nevertheless opens up onto some important issues for a feminist theory of the reader. In particular, her contention that a female "speaker" (or reader) may be articulating a different meaning when she repeats a male text is close to Luce Irigaray's notion of feminine "mimesis":- meaningfully discussed and interpreted by the Researcher here too……

Many examples of this principle can be adduced in feminist literary criticism. The "elsewhere" in Harris's statement, for all its apparent mimicry of male stereotypes of the lesbian, surely lies in its articulation of women's rage-a rage that, in the Researcher's interpretation of the remark, stems from women's powerlessness and oppression rather than, say, from disappointment over their lack of a penis (the patriarchal view). Thus, as Zimmerman notes, "context"- the terms of address and reception –is all important in determining the meaning of any given utterance or text.

In the Researcher's opinion, the function of feminist criticism is similarly to empower women by the force of its stories and interpretations, locating that "difference of view" so eloquently described by Mary Jacobus.[203] At least when we talk to each other-on the pages of feminist journals, special issues, or anthologies-it seems important to be clear and frank about the stakes of our work.

Both Kolodny and Greenberg, then, writing out of very different critical traditions, exhibit a typically feminine reluctance to admit to the desire for power- a reluctance that in Kolodny's case threatens to undermine the entire feminist enterprise of trying to account for

201 Caren Greenberg, "Reading Reading: Echo's Abduction of Language," in McConnell-Ginet, Borker, and Furman, Women and Language in Literature and Society, p. 303.

202 In a paper entitled "Feminist Theory and Lesbian Consciousness," delivered at the Women's Studies Conference, Madison, Wisconsin, September 1984, Cheryl Kader speculates that the contemporary emphasis on "desire" may be a move to displace or replace feminism's concern with power and power relations. Greenberg's essay provides an excellent case in point for her thesis.

203 Austin remarked that when we utter 'I do' in a marital ceremony 'we are doing something – namely, marrying, rather than reporting something, namely that we are marrying' (Austin 1975, p. 13). For further study of speech-act theory, see Searle (1969).

the specificity of the female reader. Kolodny's concern that nothing is taken away from men, leads her to assert that they can read women's texts just as women do. **I am haunted by the ambiguity of that cover. Sometimes I have a dream of the feminist literary conference of the future. The demonic woman rises to speak, but she mutates before our eyes, into a mermaid, a vampire, a column of fire. The diacritical woman rises to speak but she has no head. He is forceful; he is articulate; he is talking about Heidegger or Derrida or Levi-Strauss or Brecht. He is wearing a dress.**[204] Showalter, then, is rightly skeptical of the tendency of male critics to appropriate feminism. At the same time, however, she wants to allow for the possibility of male feminist readings of texts, maintaining that since (female) feminists have frequently complained about being ignored by the male critical establishment, it is hardly fair to condemn the few men who are taking us seriously at last.

Showalter singles out Jonathan Culler as her model male-feminist critic, referring to the chapter section entitled "Reading as a Woman" in his book On Deconstruction. Showalter notes approvingly that despite his title, Culler is not himself interested in "reading as a woman" – not, that is, interested in playing Tootsie and appropriating the feminine. The Researcher, on the contrary, would argue that- that is precisely part of his agenda.

In "Reading as a Woman," Culler constructs a historical account of feminist criticism, classifying it into three stages, or moments. The first moment, according to Culler, appeals to a notion of "women's experience" as a source of authority for women's responses as readers. The second moment is exemplified by Judith Fetterley's strategy of resistance to male literature and its designs on the female reader. Feminist criticism at this stage is a critique of what Mary Ellmann in Thinking about Women calls "phallic criticism." The third moment also entails a critique of phallic criticism, but unlike the second, which works "to prove itself more rational, serious, and reflective than male criticism," the third type of critique exposes the way "notions of the rational are tied to or in complicity with the interests of the male."[205]

For Culler, each stage of feminist criticism renders increasingly problematic the idea of "women's experience." By calling this notion into question, Culler manages to clear a space for male feminist interpretations of literary texts. "The conclusions reached in feminist criticism of this sort are not specific to women in the sense that one can sympathize, comprehend and agree only if one has had certain experiences which are women's" (that is to say, the Researcher takes it, only if one is a woman). "On the contrary, these readings demonstrate the limitations of male critical interpretations in terms that male critics would purport to accept" (p. 58). Not anyone, of course, can be a woman reader, but anybody can hypothesize one, and the Researcher here goes on to offer a reading based on this hypothesis and designed to "demonstrate the limitations of male critical interpretations."

Astonishingly, Culler never reflects on how this reading of Freud subverts much of his own argument. For if the privileging of the hypothetical and the invisible is indeed related to a patriarchal world view, then it follows that Culler himself is being patriarchal just at the point when he seems to be most feminist –when he arrogates to himself and to other male critics, the ability to read as women by "hypothesizing" women readers. It also follows that a genuinely feminist literary criticism might wish to repudiate the hypothesis of a woman reader and instead promote the "sensible," visible, actual female reader.

According to Freud, hypothesizing is a male activity. There are, however, many more compelling reasons for feminists to be wary of a hypothesis that allows men to read as

204 Elaine Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year," Raritan 3, no. 2 (1983): 149.

205 Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 258z

women. To illustrate, we can consider the case of a man and a woman reading Freud's text as Culler glosses it. Let us, then, do full justice to the contradictory situation of woman, refusing to choose either side of a sexist alternative, and suggest that to read as a woman in a patriarchal culture necessitates that the hypothesis of a woman reader be advanced by an actual woman reader: the female feminist critic.

It is crucial to employ the notion of a hypothetical woman reader (as the Researcher herself has done when she is speculating her response to Freud/Culler) if as critics we wish to be able to make generalizations about the activity of reading. Yet, it is equally important that we refer these generalizations to the experience of real women, in spite of Culler's attempt to assign the category of "experience" largely to a mythical "first moment" of feminist criticism, as if we should have outgrown such an immature concern. At the end of the section on "Reading as a Woman," Culler quotes Kamuf in order to elucidate his own point, transposing what she says about writing as a woman to reading as a woman:

A woman [reading] as a woman... the repetition has no reason to stop there, no finite number of times it can be repeated until it closes itself off logically, with the original identity recuperated in a final term. Likewise, one can find only arbitrary beginnings for the series, and no term which is not already a repetition of a woman [reading] as a woman [reading] as a... (p. 64)

With each turn of the phrase, 'woman' seems to be further diminished. And suppose we were to repeat Kamuf's statement as repeated by Culler, only substituting the word man for woman: man reading as a man. When we substitute **man** for **woman** in the passage, the substitution actually serves to solidify the sense of the subject as point of origin (it thus interestingly coincides with one of the definitions of **tautology** given in the O.E.D.: " a repetition of acts, incidents, or experiences, used for the sending of a thing back to its place of origin"). Importantly for our purposes, this notion of 'ground' opens onto a definition of 'experience' more useful for feminism than the "individualistic, idiosyncratic sense of something belonging to", someone that Kamuf and Culler find objectionable.[206] Just as the notion of 'ground' is relational, so 'experience' is used to designate a *process* – "a process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed... For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world."[207] Needless to say-and this is the point of de Lauretis's opening the chapter with an anecdote from Woolf's A Room of One's Own – feminist criticism and theory play a crucial role in the process by which women's experience is made conscious, articulated, and –in the case of a Virginia Woolf-even constructed.

If, then, we wish to participate in, and elucidate the ongoing process that makes up female subjectivity, feminists at this historical moment need to insist on the importance of real women as interpreters. Contrary to her claim, however, that is not what Culler does: for men to devote little sections of their big books to "reading as a woman" simply perpetuates the complacent view that man can include and, as Culler says, "comprehend" woman just as the generic term man in language is said to do. Man thus, once again achieves universality at the expense of women, according to the Researcher. Interpretation is, as the Researcher has insisted throughout this conclusion, crucially bound up with power. Moreover, as female critics who are (presumably) concerned

206 Ibid., p. 159.

207 Ibid., p. 159.

to address ourselves to other women, we are placed in a potential relation of power over female readers, including the critics, whose theories and interpretations we dispute.

The Researcher's particular concern here has been to empower female readers, of texts, in part by rescuing them from the oblivion to which male critics would consign them. Other feminists have insisted on delivering female writers from the premature burial they have suffered at the hands of those who declare the death of the author. By working on a variety of fronts for the survival and empowerment of women, feminist criticism performs an escape act dedicated to freeing women from all male captivity narratives, whether these are found in literature, criticism, or theory.

Bodies, Identities, Feminisms

Instead of interrogating a category, we will interrogate a woman. It will at least be more agreeable.
The Poems of Laura Riding, 1938, especially discusses this aspect. To quote an extract from his poem 'Care in Calling':

Let it be a care

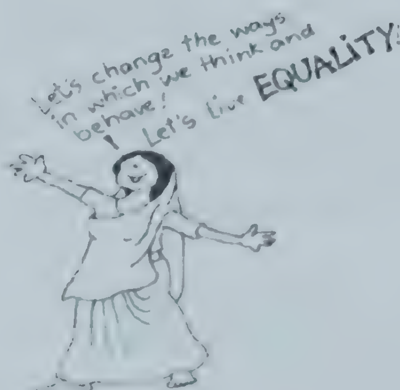
How man or child

Be called man or child,

Or woman, woman.

Laura Riding, 'Care in Calling',

In the Researcher's research there are allusions to what she calls the peculiar temporalities of 'women'. But what are the consequences of this for feminism; what does it mean to insist that 'women' are only sometimes 'women', and wouldn't this suggestion undercut feminism anyway?



That is, that it's not possible to live twenty-fours hours a day soaked in the immediate awareness of one's sex. Gendered self-consciousness has, mercifully, a flickering nature. Yet

even here there are at once some puzzles: because to be hit by the intrusions of bodily being – to be caught out by the start of menstruation, for instance- is just not the same as being caught up unexpectedly in 'being a woman'.

Someone might well retort, against the Researcher's dark examples, that the experiences of sexual happiness or of childbearing might furnish resonantly optimistic ways of taking up 'being a woman now'. These instances can affirm some solidarities among women; that there are such positive elements to being a woman that only a joyless Puritan could miss them; and that it is exaggeratedly pessimistic to characterize the mutual recognition of woman-ness as merely the exchanged glances of those cornered in the same cells by the epithet 'woman'.

'Women' as a collective noun has suffered its changes, as the chapters above have suggested. The question then for a feminist history is to discover whose, and with what effects. This constant characterizing also generates the political dilemma for feminism, which –necessarily landed with 'women' –has no choice but to work with or against different versions of the same wavering collectivity.

Is 'women', then, an eternally compromised noun? The Researcher's aim here is different – it is to emphasize that inherent shakiness of the designation 'women' which exists prior to both its revolutionary and conservative deployments, and which is reflected in the spasmodic and striking coincidences of leftist and rightist propositions about the family or female nature. The cautionary point of this emphasis is far from being anti-feminist.

To be named as a **woman,** can be the precondition for some kinds of solidarity. Political rhetorics, which orchestrate an identity or 'women or mothers', may generate refusals from their ostensible targets. So, to the well-know Lacanian formula-that there's no becoming a subject without having to endure some corresponding subjection –we could add, a little more optimistically, that there's no becoming a subject without the generation, sooner or later, or a contesting politics of that subject. There is a wish among several versions of Anglo-American feminism to assert the real underlying unities among women, and of the touchstone of 'women's experience'. It is as if this powerful base could guarantee, both the integrity, and the survival of militant feminism. Other schools, sometimes influenced by readings of Luce Irigaray, emphasize their belief in the necessity of a philosophy, which includes the distinctiveness of women's bodies. The now familiar device for challenging the essentialism from a feminist perspective, attacks it false universality in representing the experiences of, usually, middle-class white western women as if they embraced all womankind.

It is important to recognize and discuss the singnificance of the phrase: 'but that's me!'

of some described experience, which, if the political possibilities are there, will pull some women together into a declared feminism. The phrase works curiously, for it implies that the experiences originate with the women, and it masks the likelihood that instead, these have accrued to women not by virtue of their womanhood alone, but as traces of domination, whether natural or political.

We do not need a totality in order to work well. The feminist dream of a common language, like all dreams for a perfectly faithful naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one. In that sense, dialectics too is a dream language, longing to resolve contradiction.

She pursues her attack on that spectrum of identities and identifications, which constitute some contemporary feminist thought:

Feminisms and Marxism's have run aground on Western epistemological alternatives to construct a revolutionary subject from the perspective of a hierarchy of oppressions and/or a latent position of moral superiority, innocence, and greater closeness to nature.

It is that obstinate core of identification, purity, and mothering, which helps to underpin the appeal to 'women's experience'-and that core is the concept of the female body.

Hard, indeed, to speak against the body, even if it is allowed that the collective 'women' may be an effect of history, what about biology, materiality? Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir–she who, ironically, has been so often upbraided for paying no attention to precisely what she does name here-wrote in The Second Sex:

'In the sexual act, and in maternity not only time, and strength, but also essential values are involved for the woman. Rationalist materialism tries in vain to disregard this dramatic aspect of sexuality.'

Here Elizabeth Gross sets out her understanding of the Irigarayan conception:

The social and patriarchal disavowal of the specificity of women's bodies is a function; not only of discriminatory social practices, but, more insidiously, of the phallocentrism invested in the regimes of knowledge – science, philosophy, the arts, - which function only because and with the effect of the submersion of women under male categories, values and norms. For Irigaray, the reinscription, through discourses, of a positive, autonomous body for women is to render dysfunctional all forms of knowledge that have hitherto presented themselves as neutral, objective or perspective-less.

If, for the moment, we take up this conviction about the political-analytic force or women's bodies and lead it towards history, then our question becomes, - In what ways have these social and patriarchal 'disavowals' functioned, and how could the subdued bodies of women be restored in a true form? Do the existing social histories of the female body answer that?

So to the history of the body as a narrative of morbidity and its defeats, we could contrast a historical sociology of the body. This would worry about the management of populations, about social policies drawing on demography or eugenics, about malnutrition caused by economic policy in another hemisphere, the epidemiology of industrial and nuclear pollution, and so forth. 'The body' is not, for all its, corporeality, and originating point nor yet a terminus; it is a result or an effect.

And yet, this train of thought doesn't satisfy our original question of the bodies of women in history. Even a gender-specific historical sociology would somehow miss the point. A history of prostitution but this time written from the side of the clients, of contraception written from the side of the fathers-to adds to the histories of bodily endurance, triumphant musculature, or the humiliations of the feebler of frame. All this and more could count up the male body in history, its frailties and its enjoyments, analogously to women's. The sum of the two parts, men and women, would still not produce a satisfying total of 'the body', now democratically analyzed with a proper regard to sexual difference.

Only at times will the body impose itself or be arranged as that of a woman or a man, so that, if we set out to track the bodies of women in history, we would assume in advance that which really we needed to catch, instead, on the wing of its formulation. Neither the body marked with time, nor the sexed body marked with time, are the right concepts here. If female bodies are thought of as perennially such, as constant and even embodiments of sexed being, that is misconception which carries risks. If it leads to feminist celebrations of the body as female, which intoxicatingly forget the temporality and malleability of gendered existence, at the same time it makes the feminist critique of, say, the instrumental positioning of women's bodies all the harder to develop coherently, because this critique needs some notion of temporality too.

Sebastiano Timpanaro attempts this for socialism in his On Materialism. And Michel Foucault, at points in his History of Sexuality, treats 'bodies and their pleasures' as touchstones of an anarchic truth, innocent brute clarities which are then scored through with

the strategies of bio-technical management from on high. **Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.** (The integrity of the body's claim to afford a starting-point for analysis is refused.)

'Effective' history differs from traditional history in being without constraints. Those women's bodies become women's bodies only as they are caught up in the tyrannies, the overwhelming incursions of both nature and man – or, more optimistically, that there are also vehement pleasures and delights to offset a history of unbridled and violent subjection. Instead, we would need to maintain that women only sometimes live in the flesh, distinctively of women, as it were, and this is a function of historical categorizations as well as of an individual daily phenomenology.

Conditions of deprivation, of sex-specific hard labour, do also pull together the bent backs of women, but then it is the sexual division of labour which has made the partition –not a natural bodily unity. The body becomes visible as a body, and as a female body, only under some particular gaze – including that of politics.

So, the sexed body is not something reliably constant, which can afford a good underpinning for the complications of the thousand discourses on 'women'. There is no deep natural collectivity of women's bodies which precedes some subsequent arrangement of them through history or biopolitics. If the body is an unsteady mark, scarred in its long decay, then the sexed body too undergoes a similar radical temporality, and more transitory states.

It has to be conceded, that such philosophies do not have to assume any naturally bestowed identity of women; the female body can be harshly characterized from above. This is demonstrated through the Researcher's exposition of the Irigayan schema, a clear, sympathetic account of the feminist reception of that work:

Psychical, social and interpersonal meanings thus, mark the body, and through it, the identities or interiority of sexed objects. The female body is inscribed socially, and most often, individually experienced as a lacking, incomplete or inadequate body...

It is the conclusion here, which worries the Researcher - that the goal is a fresh and autonomous femininity, voiced in a revolutionary new language, to speak a non-alienated being of woman. Indeed, the 'woman' we have available, is severely damaged. But, for the Researcher - in common with many other feminists, but unlike many others again - she would not seek the freshly conceived creature, the revelatory Woman we have not yet heard. She is an old enough project, whose repeated failures testify to the impossibility of carving out a truly radical space; the damage flows from the very categorization 'woman' which is and has always been circumscribed in advance from some quarter or other, rendering the ideal of a purely self-representing 'femininity' implausible. A true independence here would only be possible when all existing ideas of sexual difference had been laid to rest; but then 'woman', too, would be buried. For the concept, 'women's bodies' is opaque, and like 'women' it is always in some juxtaposition to 'human' and to 'men'. If 'women' after the late seventeenth century undergoes intensified feminizing, this change does not occur as a linear shift alone, as if we had moved from mercifully less of 'women' through a later excess of them.

For 'women' are always differently re-membered, and the gulf between them, and the generally human will be more or less thornily intractable. One measure of that gulf is the depth of 'women's resonances. Can it be claimed that the collective 'women' possesses a virtually metaphorical force, in the way that the theatrical Woman does? And if it does, this force would change. Linguistic studies of the 1950s, contemplated the ranges of metaphor. Here the Researcher takes the opportunity to offer the example of chastity, which gradually became restricted in its reference to women's conduct. Perhaps, the Researcher concludes,

this risky power of being caught at its work through those analyses which had interested I. A. Richards – of the interactions between a word's Sense and its Emotion or Gesture'.

To adopt Empson's phrase, the evolutions of 'women' must offer good instance of a changing 'compacted doctrine'. It is the variant with which Post-Enlightenment feminism must tangle women as almost an anthropological species/being, nevertheless so impacted that it dooms feminism to being a kind of oppositional anthropology to protect its own kin, or is one to look for evolutions of 'women' in it? Rather than this, Julia Kristeva has suggested that modern European-feminism, because of its very invocation of 'women', is itself a temporary form, which must wither away. European feminism, trading in this debased currency 'women', has turned into a renewed form of the tedious old anthropomorphism –into a gynomorphism, which is equally suspect.

Meanwhile, she characterizes two strands of contemporary feminism. One associates women, using spatial references, to the timelessly maternal. Cyclical, monumental temporalities are allied to an idea of femaleness.

The Researcher's recommendation is here, a bold stroke-that the only revolutionary road will slice through the current confusions to bypass 'women', as an anthropomorphic stumbling block. But this would only follow if you assume that the identity of 'women' is really coherent, so that you are faced only with the options of revering it, or abandoning it for its hopeless antagonistic conservatism, as she proposes. For as long as the sexes are socially distinguished, 'women' will be nominated in their apartness, so that sexual division will always be liable to conflation with some fundamental ontological sexual difference. So feminism, the reaction to this state of affairs, cannot be merely transitional, and a true post-feminism can never arrive.

But if feminism can't be fairly characterized as a passing cloud, which heralds the dawn of an ultimate sexual translucency, and then neither must it be understood to name untroubled solidities of women. It cannot be a philosophy of 'the real'.

Modern feminism, which in its sociological aspects is landed with the identity of women as an achieved fact of history and epistemology, can only swing between asserting and refusing the completeness of this given identity. But both the 'special needs' of women as different, or the desired 'equality', or women as similar, may be swamped by the power of the categorization to defeat such fractures within it.

If feminism is the voicing of 'women' from the side of 'women', then it cannot but act out the full ambiguities of that category. This reflection reduces some of the sting and mystery of feminism's ceaseless oscillations, and allows us to prophesy its next incarnations. What does it imply for the practice of feminist politics? It explains, too, the exhaustion with reiterations about 'women', which must afflict the most dedicated feminist. Does all of this mean, then, that the better programme for feminism now would be – to minimize 'women'?

So feminism must be agile enough to say, 'Now we will be "women" –but now we will be persons, not these "women'. Of course this means that feminism must 'speak women', while at the same time, an acute awareness of its vagaries is imperative. **To be, or not to be, 'a woman'; to write or not 'as a woman'; to espouse an egalitarianism which sees sexed manifestations as blocks on the road to full democracy; to love theories of difference which don't anticipate their own dissolution: these uncertainties are rehearsed endlessly in the history of feminism, and fought through within feminist-influenced politics, as is in this research, by the Researcher.**

Does Sex Have a History?

DESDEMONA. Am I that name, Iago?

IAGO. What name, fair lady?

DESDEMONA:Such as she says my lord did say I was.
(William Shakespeare, Othello, Act IV, Scene II, 1622)

The black abolitionist and freed slave, Sojourner Truth, spoke out at the Akron convention in 1851, and named her own toughness in a famous peroration against the notion of woman's disqualifying frailty. For both a concentration on and a refusal of the identity of 'women' are essential to feminism. This its history makes plain.

The Researcher relates to all these for she wants to sidestep these debates to move to the ground of historical construction, including the history of feminism itself, and suggest that not only 'woman' but also 'women' is troublesome – and that this extension of our suspicions is in the interest of feminism. That we can't bracket off either Woman, whose capital letter has long alerted us to her dangers, or the more modest lower-case 'woman', while leaving unexamined the ordinary, innocent-sounding 'women'.

To put it schematically: 'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; 'women' is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on; 'women' is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation.

If Woman is in blatant disgrace, and woman is transparently suspicious, why lose sleep over a straightforward descriptive noun, 'women'? Moreover, how could feminism gain if its founding category is also to be dragged into the shadows properly cast by Woman? Not woman, but women – then we can get on with it.

It is true that socialist feminism has always tended to claim that women are socially produced in the sense of being 'conditioned' and that femininity is an effect. Some variants of American and European cultural and radical feminism do retain a faith in the integrity of 'women' as a category.

Here someone might retort that there are real, concrete women. That what Foucault did for the concept of 'the homosexual' as an invented classification just cannot be done for women, who indubitably existed long before the nineteenth century unfolded its tedious mania for fresh categorizations. That historical constructionism has run mad if it can believe otherwise.

A brief response would be that, unmet needs and sufferings do not spring from a social reality of oppression, which has to be posed against what is said and written about women – but that they spring from the ways in which women are positioned, often harshly or stupidly, as women'.

Feminism has intermittently been as vexed with the urgency of disengaging from the category 'women' as it has with laying claim to it; twentieth-century European feminism has been constitutionally torn between fighting against over-feminization and against under-feminization, especially where social policies have been at stake. At times, feminism might have nothing to say on the subject of 'women' –when their excessive identification would swallow any opposition, engulfing it hopelessly.

This isn't to imply that every address to 'women' is bad, or that feminism has some special access to a correct and tolerable level of feminization. A political interest may descend to illuminate 'women' from almost anywhere in the rhetorical firmament, like lightning.

There are alternatives to those schools of thought which in saying that 'women' is fictional are silent about 'women', and those which, from an opposite perspective, proclaim that the reality of women is yet to come, but that this time, it's we, women, who will define her.

What then is the point of querying the constancy of 'men' or 'women'? Isn't it trying to consolidate a progressive new identity of women who are constantly mis-defined, half-visible in their real difference? Yet the history of feminism has also been a struggle against over zealous identifications; and feminism must negotiate the quicksands of 'women', which will not allow it to settle on either identities or counter-identities but which condemn it to an incessant striving for a brief foothold.

There are differing temporalities of 'women', and these substitute the possibility of being 'at times a woman' for eternal difference on the one hand, or undifferentiation on the other. This escapes that unappetizing choice between 'real women' who are always solidly in the designation, regardless, or post-women, no longer-women, who have seen it all, are tired of it, and prefer evanescence.

The question of how far anyone can take on the identity of being a woman in a thoroughgoing manner recalls the fictive status accorded to sexual identities by some psychoanalytic thought. Can anyone fully inhabit a gender without a degree of horror?

Why is this suggestion about the consolidations of a classification any different from a history of ideas about women? Only because in it nothing is assumed about an underlying continuity of real women, above whom constant bodies changing aerial descriptions dance. If it's taken for granted that the category of women simply refers, over time, to a rather different content, a sort of Women Through the Ages approach, then the full historicity of what is at stake becomes lost.

To speculate about the history of sexual consolidations does not spring from a longing for a lost innocence.

As John Donne wrote:

Difference of sex no more wee knew

Than our Guardian Angells doe

The Researcher has written about the chances for a history of alternations in the collectivity of 'women'. Why nor 'men' too? It's true that the completion of the project outlined here would demand that, and would not be satisfied by studies of the mergence of patriarchs, eunuchs, or the cult of machismo, for example: more radical work could be done on the whole category of 'men' and its relations with Humanity.

How might this be done? How could the peculiar temporality of 'women' be demonstrated? The emergence of new entities after the English-tenment and their implicatedness with the collectivity of women-like the idea of 'the social'.

What does it mean to say that the modern collectivity of women was established in the midst of other formations? Feminism's impulse is often, not surprisingly, to make a

celebratory identification with a rush of Women onto the historical stage. The more engaging questions for feminism is then what lies beneath.

The grouping of 'women' as newly conceived political subjects, is marked in the long suffrage debates and campaigns, which illustrate their volatile alignments of sexed meaning. An ostensibly unsexed Humanity, broken through political pressures of suffragist and anti-suffragist forces into blocs of humans and women, men and women, closed and resealed at different points in different nations.

Perhaps it could be argued that in order for 'women' to speak as such, some formal consolidation of 'men against women' is the gloomy prerequisite. That it is sexual antagonism, which shapes sexual solidarity; and that assaults and counter-assaults, with all their irritations, are what making for a rough kind of feminism.

So Christine de Pisan wrote 'for women' in the querelle des femmes. The stage was set between a sexual cynicism which took marriage to be an outdated institution – Jean de Meung's stance in his popular Roman de la Rose – and a contrasted idealism which demanded that men profess loyalty to women, and adhere to marriage as a mark of respect for the female sex – Christine de Pisan's position in the Debat sur le Roman de la Rose, of about 1400 to 1402. This city needs to be built, because men will vilify women.

It argues in the name of 'women', and in that it is unlike the earlier complicated typologies of the sexes of the works of the women mystics. The fourteenth-and fifteenth-century polemic proposes that noble women should withdraw to a place apart, a tower, a city, there to pursue their devotions untroubled by the scorn of men in the order of the world. This highly stylized counter-antagonism draws in 'all women' under its banner against 'all men'. Thus 'Jane Anger' who in 1589 published a broadside, Jane Anger, her Protection for Women, to defend them against the Scandalous Reports of a late Surfeiting Love... The writer, whether truly female or agent provocateur, burns on the page with wild rhetoric, the cry of sex against the attacking other sex, the mediaeval defences wound to the highest pitch: **Their slanderous tongues are so short, and all the time wherein they have lavished out their words freely has been so long, that they know we cannot catch hold of them to pull them out.**

The retort to the surfeited lover's charges is to invert them, to mass all women against all men:

We are the grief of man, in that we take all the grief from man: we languish when they laugh, we sit sighing when they sit singing, and sit sobbing when they lie slugging and sleeping. Mulier est hominis confusio because her kind heart cannot so sharply reprove their frantic fits as these mad frenzies deserve.

When Mary Wollstonecraft argued that 'the sexual should not destroy the human character' in her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, this encapsulated the seventeenth-century feminist analysis that women must somehow disengage from their growing endemic sexualisation.

It is this, which makes it difficult to interpret the defences and proclamations of 'women' against 'men' as pre-feminism. To read the work of 'Jane Anger' and others as preconditions for eighteenth-century feminism elides too much, for it suggests that there is some clear continuity between defensive celebrations of 'women' and the beginning of the 1790s claims to rights for women, and their advancement as potential political subjects. The transition, if indeed there is one, from passing consolidations of 'women' as candidates for virtue, to 'women' as candidates for the vote, is intricate and obscure.

The Researcher's suggestion isn't so much that after the seventeenth century, a change in ideas about women and their nature develops' rather that 'women' itself comes to carry an

altered weight, and that a re-ordered idea of Nature has a different intimacy of association with 'woman' who is accordingly refashioned.

'Man in society' did not undergo the same kind of immersion, as did woman. He **faced** society, rather; a society already permeated by the feminine. As with man, so here–for once–with woman. To historicize woman across the means of production is also not enough. Nevertheless, another reference to Marx may be pressed into the service of sexual consolidations, and into the critique of the idea that sexual polarities are constant –his comment on the concept of Labour:

The most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all... Labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity –precisely because of their abstractness –for all epochs are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historical relations, and possess their full validity only for and within those relations.

The ideas of temporality, which are suggested here, need not, of course, be restricted to 'women'. Or, most commonly, you will skate across the several identities, which well take your weight, relying on the most useful for your purposes of the moment; like Hanif Kureishi's suave character in the film My Beautiful Laundrette, who says impatiently, 'I'm a professional businessman, not a professional Pakistani'.

The troubles of 'women', then, aren't unique. But aren't they arguably peculiar in that 'women', half the human population, do suffer from an extraordinary weight of characterization? Feminism of late has emphasized that indeed 'women' are far from being racially or culturally homogeneous, and it may be thought that this corrective provides the proper answer to the hesitations the Researcher has advanced here about 'women'. Indeed, there is a world of helpful difference between making claims in the name of, an annoyingly generalized 'women' and doing so in the name of say, 'elderly Cantonese women living in Soho'. It's not that the Researcher is proposing a new slogan for feminism here – of feminism without 'women'. Rather, the suggestion is that 'women' is a simultaneous foundation of and an irritant of feminism, and that this is constitutionally so. There is, as we have repeatedly learned, no fluent trajectory from feminism to a truly sexually democratic humanism; there is no easy passage from 'women' to 'humanity'.

THE POLITICS OF WRITING (THE) BODY: ECRITURE FEMININE

For feminism, asking whether there is, socially, a female sexuality is the same as asking whether women exist. (MacKinnon 1981:20)

If woman's sexuality does not exist as an independent social fact – not the product of male projection – then woman does not exist.

By contrast, consider these two short quotes from French feminist texts:

Woman has sex organs about everywhere. (Irigaray 1981:103)

Let the priests tremble; we are going to show them our sexts (a Pun on sex and Texts). (Cixous 1981b: 255)

These quotes suggest that women do exist sexually; it shall be shown as a fearful social fact, textually. This inscription of woman's difference in language is ecriture feminine or writing (the) body.

There is a difference between MacKinnon and French feminism: MacKinnon wants a real, reified female sexuality, whereas Irigaray and Cixous see sexual difference constituting itself, discursively through inscribed meanings. These quotations also sum up the differences between American academic feminism and postmodernist French feminism: one emphasizes

the empirical, the irreducible reality of woman's experience; the other emphasizes the primacy of discourse, woman's discourse, without which there is no experience –to speak of.

American academic feminism (Women's Studies) began with the perception that women's experiences, history, and voice were absent from the disciplines of western knowledge and art. Theories of behavior in the social science, periodizations of history in historiography, genre distinctions in literary criticism had been established without any reference to the experience of women as research subjects, as agents in history, or, as writers of literary texts. To remedy this "deafening silence" of women's experience and voice in western culture and history, feminist social scientists studied women as research subjects; feminist historians, using nontraditional sources and methods, sought to reconstruct the everyday life of women in different class locations; and feminist literary critics resurrected the work of women writers who had been marginalized by the male canon. Emphasizing **gender** differences, academic feminists charged that mainstream theorizes of human development as well as aesthetic or literary theorizes were male-biased or androcentric, often denigrating women's experiences and contributions to culture or transposing male experiences into norms of **human** behavior.

By contrast, French feminism or ecriture feminine, rooted in a tradition of European philosophy, linguistic, and psychoanalysis, posits the feminine as that, which is repressed, misrepresented in the discourses of western culture and thought. Not only has women's voice or experience been excluded from the subject matter of knowledge, but also even when the discourse is "about" women, or women are the speaking subjects, (it) they still speak(s) according to phallocratic codes. French feminism, by contrast with American feminist theory, holds that a new woman's writing of discourse is necessary to retrieve the repression of the feminine unconscious in western discourse and models of subjectivity. On the basis of the radical alterity of woman's sexual difference, a new, marked writing, ecriture feminine, parle-femme, is called for.

Simon de Beauvior accepts this new valorization and appropriation of woman's bodily experiences in pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, the transcendence of bodily alienation in feminist praxis; but she strongly resists a cultism, narcissism, or a mysticism of the body (Simons and Benjamin 1979:342). Yet, her pronouncements on French feminism seem to be deliberate misreadings as if "writing the body" was only a new biological reductionism, an essentialism, based on some ontological difference of woman's body or, what de Beauvior calls, the "construction of a counter-penis"(Simons and Benjamin 1979:342).

But, according to the Researcher she neglects to note, along with other critics, that woman's body is always mediated by language; the human body is a text, a sign, not just a piece of fleshy matter. The structures of language and other signifying practices that code woman's body is as equally oppressive as the material/social structures that have tended to mediate one's awareness of one's body and self and erotic possibilities. For this reason, some filmmakers, according to Mary Ann Doane (1981) have refused to film woman's body, so layered has it best with the male gaze, with male signification? In these comments, de Beauvior completely ignores the roots of ecriture feminine as a response to Lacanian psychoanalysis that claims sexual differences cannot be reduced to biology because woman's body is constituted through phallic symbolization.

ECRITURE FEMININE

French feminism, ecriture feminine, essential deconstructs the phallic organization of sexuality and its code, which positions woman's sexuality and signified body as a mirror or complement to male sexual identity. In this brief exposition of conclusion the Researcher wants to outline two themes: (1) the displacement of the male economy of desire for a

feminine economy of pleasure or jouissance; and (2) the displacement of a dualistic, oppositional, heterosexuality.

DECONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCES TO OTHERNESS

These differences are already at work in phenomenological account of desire and erotic perception where woman's body is already constituted, or sexualized, as the object of desire, fragmented into erogenous zones. Cixous refers to de Beauvior's description of woman's dependent sexuality in The Second Sex as the old fool's game: "I will give you your body and you will give me mine" (Cixous 1981 a: 256). Woman's body is already colonized by the hegemony of male desire; it is not your body.

By speaking the body, ecriture feminine reverses the hierarchy of male and female sexuality, this male identity-in-difference, by enunciating woman's sexual embodiment as the general model of sexuality and showing male sexuality as a variant of it, a prolonged utilization of the phallic stage. Jonathan Culler has noted this deconstructionist strategy of French feminism; instead of lack, woman's body is oversupplied: "With her, two sexual organs, one male and one female, is the general model of sexuality" (1982:172).

Irigaray expands: "Woman has sex organs just about everywhere" (1981:103). Woman's sexuality is not one, but two, or even plural, the multiplicity of sexualized zones spread across the body: "She is neither one nor two she cannot strictly speaking be determined as one person or two. She renders any definition inadequate. Moreover, she has no proper name" (Irigaray 1981: 101). Irigaray posits woman's autoeroticism as plural, based on the primacy of touch.

In constructing the radical otherness of female autoeroticism, ecriture feminine displaces the male economy of desire, the gap between desire and its object, the nexus of need, absence, and representation, for the feminine economy of pleasure or jouissance.

> **No, it is at level of sexual pleasure (jouissance) in the Researcher's opinion that the difference makes itself clearly apparent in as far as woman's libidinal economy.... "How do I experience sexual pleasure? What is feminine sexual pleasure; where does it take lace; how is it inscribed at the level of her body, of her unconscious? And then, how is it put into writing?" (Cixous 1981:95)**

This concept of jouissance is central in Kristeva's writings on pregnancy and motherhood; it is the orgasmic pleasure of sexual continuity with the maternal body, of libidinal fusion.[208] Through motherhood one comes in contact with one's own mother before the fear of castration. "By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her Mother; she becomes, she is her own Mother. They are the same, differentiating itself" (Kristeva 1980:239). Jouissance does not come in quantifiable units. As Jane Gallop states:

You can have one or multiple orgasms. They are quantifiable, delimitable. You cannot have one jouissance and there is no plural.... Feminine sexuality is a 'Jouissance

208 It is arguable whether Kristeva should be classified as a French feminist, or even post-feminist philosopher, but she is surely not a proponent of ecriture feminine. Kristeva takes the "feminine" to signify the semiotic realm, which breaks through and subverts symbolic codes, the Law of the Father. The "feminine" can then be found in male avant-garde writers who have not repressed their pre-symbolic or pre-Oedipal bond with the mother; it is not gender specific. But, Irigaray, by contrast, is concerned with opening up a discursive space whereby the representation of woman's specific sexual difference becomes possible. The specification of sexual difference has no relevance in Kristeva's work because Kristeva disconnects the "feminine" from "women." See- The Kristeva Reader, 9-12.

enveloped in its own contiguity'. Such jouissance would be sparks of pleasure ignited by contact at any point, any moment along the line, not waiting for a closure, but enjoying the touching. (1983:30, 31)

And in the glossary of Kristeva's Desire in Language the editor explains: "Jouissance is a giving expending, dispensing of pleasure without concern about ends or closure, it is sexual, physical and conceptual at the same time" (1980:16). Ecriture feminine stresses the figure of the mother, la mere qui jouit, who experiences pleasure, bliss, and jouissance. Irigaray criticizes Freud's analysis of the Oedipal conflict and fear of castration because the Mother never speaks; she is marginalized. Ecriture feminine enunciates the scandal of the sexual, nonvirginal Mother.

Kristeva, in her essay on" Motherhood According to Bellini" (1980), distinguishes between the paternal/symbolic aspects of motherhood and the maternal, pre-symbolic aspect of motherhood:

> The pre-symbolic aspects: the Mother' body is that towards which all women aspire, just because it lacks a penis. Here women actualize the homosexual fact of Motherhood where woman is closer to her instinctual memory more negatory of the social symbolic bond. It is the reunion of a woman –Mother with the body of her mother. This cannot be verbalized; it is a whirl of words, rhythm. (239)

Patriarchal culture seeks to repress this primordial memory of fusion with and later separation from the maternal body; this fear of the mother is masked in male sexuality.

The autonomous erotic aspects of these realms are more difficult to repress or censor in patriarchal culture because women preside over them. In this regard, Iris Young (1984) has insightful pointed out that the pregnant woman is not usually sexually objectified by the male gaze. Maternity offers what heterosexuality, as it is now historically constituted for women, cannot: libidinal fusion.

Thus, there are three overall themes of the discourse on woman's body; as identified by the Researcher...

1. Writing the body celebrates women as sexual subjects not of male desire. Writing the body celebrates woman's autonomous eroticism, separate from a model of male desire based on need, representation, and lack. This jouissance precedes self/other dualisms; it expresses the continuity of self and other.
2. Otherness of woman's body; through ecriture feminine woman's distinct bodily geography and forms are progressively disclosed, blurring the categories of binary thought and the signifying practices of male perception. "Woman's body is not one nor two. The sex, which isn't one, not a unified identity". This articulation of woman's erotic body is secured through deconstructing sexual differences based on phallomorphism a la Freud and Lacan. Through writing the body, woman's body is liberated from the objectification and fragmentation of male desire.
3. The discourse traces an archeology of woman's body from the pre-Oedipal stage. The erotogeneity of woman's body, its multiple sex organs, is repressed in the development of symbolic language because there is no one to speak it. Meanwhile, as Mary Rawlinson has noted, we never hear the feminine voice in Freud's analysis; there is no positive reading of the feminine somatic constitution (1928:166). The silent girl remains a partial man, seeking a penis-substitute in her desire; her body only complements his. In speaking woman's body, Irigaray and Cixous signify these bodily territories that have been kept under seal, suppressed in the phallic development of male and female sexual differences.

BODY-WRITING

In an article on Irigaray, Jane Gallop refers to the "unavoidable poetics of any speaking of the body. Irigaray's poietique du corps is not an expression of the body but not a poiesis, a creating of the body" (Gallop 1983:79). Speaking the body does not mirror or refer to neutral reified body in and of itself objectively escaping all anterior significations: discourse already, always, structures the body.

Kaja Silverman has brilliantly explicated the relationship between the body as constructed in discourses and the "real" body (1984:320-349). Through discourse the human body is territorialized into a male or female body. The meanings of the body in discourse actually shape the materiality of the real body and its complementary desires. Male or phallocentric discursive practices, have historically shaped and demarcated woman's body for herself. Indeed, woman's body is over determined. Accordingly, speaking the body presupposes a real body with its prior constructions to be deconstructed in the process of discursively appropriating woman's body. In speaking the body, writing is pulsed by this feminine libidinal economy and projects the meanings of a de-censored body to be materially lived. A "real" body prior to discourse is meaningless.

Writing the body, then, is both constative and performative. "Just as women's sexuality is bound up with touch, so too women use words as a form of touching. The characteristics of women's writing are, therefore, based on the significations of woman's body: the otherness within the self in prégnancy; the two lips of the labia, both one yet other, signify woman's openness to otherness in writing, her split subjectivity, not identity; her multiple polyvalent speech as homologous to the multiple sexuality of woman's body. Writing the body is writing a new text – not with the phallic pen - new inscriptions of woman's body, separate from and undermining the phallocratic coding of woman's body that produces the censure, erasure, repression of woman's libidinal economy, her alterite. Writing the body, then, is not access to a precultural body or precultural sexuality as some critics of ecriture feminine assume.

POETIC IS POLITICAL

Following Gallop's suggestion, belief in a poetics of the body might be politically radical. What would be the political effects of writing the body? Would discursively establishing the otherness of a feminine sexuality change woman's desire, her sexual practices, and thus produce referentiality in future? For both Irigaray and Cixous, the constitution of a feminine libidinal economy in discourse should have historical and political consequences. Writing the body is therefore both speech and praxis:

> **Write yourself, your body must be heard...To write an act which will not only realize the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal (Cixous 1981a: 250).**

Women seize the occasion to speak, hence her shattering entry into history. (Cixous 1981a: 249-250).

This brings to mind the **political stake** in the restricted or generalized sense if this work. The fact that woman's liberation requires transforming the economic realm and thus necessarily transforming culture and its operative agency **language**.

Yet these political consequences might appear utopian unless their analysis of the causes of feminine oppression can be justified.

They question, whether the economic, political, and cultural forms of oppression of women could be altered by women writing (the) body. Is the realm of language, discourse, and symbolism the key to the oppression of women? Is phallocracy the key to capitalist

hegemony? What systematic linkages can be made between a psychoanalytic analysis of the repression of the feminine and a feminist (Marxist or Socialist, materialist feminist) analysis of the historical forms of patriarchal control of women's labor and women's sexuality?

Although other feminists have sought to undermine patriarchal ideologies of women's difference – read inequality –by analyzing the social and therefore contingent construction of gender differences, French feminists have perversely posited a radical alterity of woman's body, pleasure, and sexuality. They doubt whether sexual "difference" or specificity can unite women across classes, races, and cultures and produce solidarity.

Gayatri Spivak, a commentator of French feminism, has responded to these sorts of criticisms. She quotes from Antoinette Fouque: "Women cannot allow themselves to deal with political problems while at the same time blotting out the unconscious. French feminists, however, have unearthed the deep structures of feminine repression in the symbolic suppression of woman's subjectivity, body, and desire in the logocentrism of western knowledge.

Spivak has shown the precise relevance of the repression of women's body to third-world women, many of who in several countries undergo clitoridectomy. Symbolically, the construction of women as exchange objects, to be exchanged by men, required effacing the clitoris as an autonomous source of sexuality, independent of reproductive purposes and patriarchal control.

Cixous and Irigaray like the Researcher here seem to also be saying that unless woman's unconscious is liberated from repression, unless women can authentically voice their own desire and pleasure, then all forms of political liberation will be to no avail.

Politically, ecriture feminine implies the transformation of a "hom(m)osexual" culture, (Irigaray) the Empire of the Self-Same, (Cixous) based on sexual difference, on the alterity of a feminine libidinal economy –keeping in mind that this economy can be found in men who do not repress their feminine side. The terms masculine/feminine do not correspond to men/women, as ideologically conceived. Both Kristeva and Cixous have explicitly stated that feminine writing can be found in male avant-garde writers – Joyce, Artaud, Genet –who also seek to undermine phallocratic discourse. According to Irigaray, we cannot leap outside phallogocentrism, nor are we outside by virtue of being "women" (1985:162). But we can practice difference.

The practice of difference is precisely in gender reading of the master discourses – Plato, Freud, Nietzsche –in moving through the masculine imaginary to show how it has marginalized the feminine. The practice of difference occurs in ecriture feminine: symbolic codes, punning, multiple meanings, lacking closure, and linear structure. Will the material conditions of woman's lives be altered by a change in dominant discourse?

CRITIQUE: ESSENTIALISM?

Judging by the critiques of ecriture feminine, by American, British, and French feminists, ecriture feminine, has triggered anti-essentialist paranoia. The Researcher has meaningfully submitted they ideology that critics of French feminism are positively terrified by the prospect of otherness, which, however, becomes concealed in rather literal-minded mis-readings of ecriture feminine. Irigaray and Cixous have been criticized as privileging subjectivity over social change, of excluding men, of lesbianism, of falling into essentialism and a metaphysics of presence, quandmeme, and of ignoring the real material forms of woman's oppression and the concrete differences among women, depending on age, class, race, and ethnic identity.

What, then, are the implications of woman's differentiated erotic embodiment for feminist theory? Is it libratory for women to own their pleasure? Does ecriture feminine posit

an essentialism: an ahistorical nature of woman; a definition of woman; a natural body and, therefore, innate differences between men and women? Does woman's erotic body, alone, make her radically other in all respects? Is not the body or our relation to our body also socially mediated, open to historical shaping? On the other hand, where or how may this discourse on the body suture gaps on feminist theory and repeal the silences in feminist theory?

Both Cixous and Irigaray reject any definition of woman, any representation or categorization of woman, any Platonic universal. "For, it is no more than a question of my making woman the subject or the object of a theory it is of subsuming the feminine under some generic term, such as "woman" (Irigaray 1977:156). Writing the body, then, does not mirror a Platonic essence. Ecriture feminine is playing into the hands of the enemy – notwithstanding the valorization of women's erotic embodiment-because it is a reductionist doctrine.

But the anti-essentialist forgets that the body is a sign, function of discourse, in ecriture feminine, as the Researcher has already described. There is no fixed, univocal, ahistorical woman's body as the referent of this discourse. Does ecriture feminine succumb to what Monique Wittig calls "the myth of woman" or "woman is wonderful" (Wittig 1984:150)? Here the Researcher would submit that this kind of cultural essentialism might characterize the conservative feminist theories of Jean Elshtain (1981) and Carol McMillan (1982). According to both "neo-feminists," woman's body and its biological imperatives, reproduction and sexuality, must be clearly demarcated from the male realm of production and political life and described as essentially different but human natural processes. To make woman's natural experiences parallel the male norm of rational activity in the public world, McMillan (Elshtain) have de-eroticized them. The charge of cultural essentialism is misapplied to ecriture feminine because Irigaray and Cixous have critiqued these binary spheres as based on the repression of the feminine, of women's sexual difference.

In what ways can ecriture feminine suture the gaps and repeal the silences in feminist theory? Socialist/feminist writings, although premised on patriarchal control of woman's sexuality and woman's labor as the causes of woman's oppression, are silent on woman's erotic embodiment. Because control of woman's labor is the fundamental tenet in socialist feminism, even woman's body is positioned as an instrument of labor in patriarchy. In Hartsock's recent essay (1983:299) woman's work is described as both mental and bodily or sensuous; in pregnancy, the body is an instrument of production. Woman's body is a material subject, but never an erotic subject of its own discourse.

We become sexed beings. French feminism surely does not deny this latter claim, for it has shown how woman's desire has been constructed and lived in a phallocratic culture. If female sexuality and desire were only the social constructions of a phallocratic culture, the sites of social power, there could be no undermining or subversion of them through what has been repressed. What positions woman's discourse, parler-femme or ecriture feminine, is woman's psyche-body, her libidinal economy, always already the excess of phallocratic culture, of its discourse and power.

Perhaps, it is best to locate ecriture feminine historically and subversively as the Researcher here suggests. Ecriture feminine, speaking and writing the body, is really up against the signifying practices of a culture, its androgynous advertisements, television, films, pornography –all the images and inscriptions of woman's body that reduce it "homologous to a male speaking body," through fetishizing, fragmenting, and degrading woman's body. Against the dominant discourse, the male gaze, or the scopic economy, ecriture feminine celebrates the radical otherness of woman's erotic embodiment.

If woman's body poses a concrete resistance to the androgyny ideal, it too can be reconstituted or remetaphorized through various cultural practices. Its matter can be reformed to obliterate its geography of pleasures. It can become a muscular "sleek," "hard," almost flat surface that mirrors a male body. Here various cultural practices – fashion, dieting, jogging, weightlifting –can be interpreted as technologies of control of the body, as reconstituting woman's body to shape a sexually indeterminate body, a gender-undecidable body (?) But, ecriture feminine makes these signifiers of woman's body slip away, and the androgyny becomes another masquerade, symbolized explicitly in the research through the varied chapters related.

Feminist Understandings: The Role of the Body in Femininity (Concluding Recommendations by the Researcher:-)

Feminists, given the dictum of the personal are political, have not merely focused on the social representations of women, but have attempted to understand how women come to adopt this position.

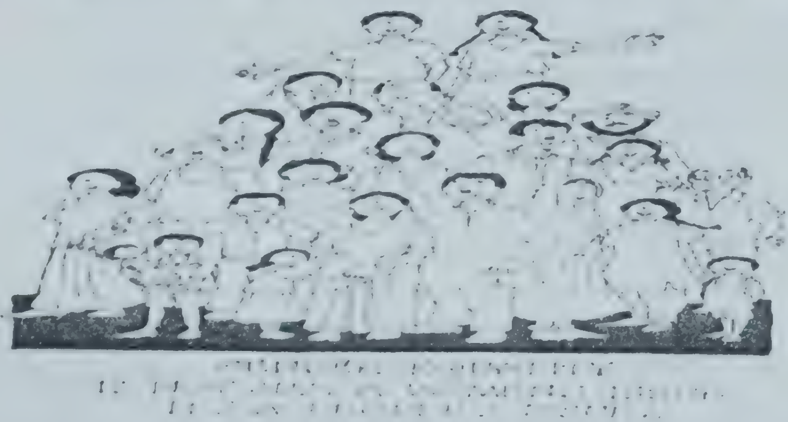
As elaborated in the research, three different theoretical frameworks may be illustrated within feminist understandings of women's oppression: **Humanist, Gynocentric** and what we have termed **Structuralist.** Within the understandings of the role of the female body in women's oppression, these diverse frameworks have been identified by the Researcher and made evident.

The Table –1 below illustrates the same...

TABLE 1: DIFFERENT THEORETICAL POSITIONS WITHIN FEMINISM
Humanist Assumptions 1 Assumes inherent human nature/potential 2. Men allowed transcendence (aspire to human potential); women must maintain immanence. 3. Women's human potential inhibited and distorted by society, which allows for development of men only.
Methods of Challenging Women's Oppression 1. Women must gain equality with men. 2. Women must be allowed transcendence, to aspire to full human development.
Criticisms 1. Liberal Theory: does not challenge external social structures but only inter-personal relationships between men and women. Does not challenge entire social structure. 2. Essentialist: assumes inherent human nature, existing outside of culture.
Gynocentric Assumptions 1. Assumes inherent female nature, which is distorted, repressed and undermined by male dominated society and individual males. 2. Masculine culture devalues and represses women's experience.
Methods of Challenging Women's Oppression 1. Traditional female experience and inherent female values must be recognized as superior and must be strived for. 2. Reject values of male society. It is not enough to strive for equality with men, but must challenge entire social structure.
Criticisms 1. Essentialist: assumes inherent femininity: reinforced patriarchal ideology of biological femininity and masculinity.

Structural-Linguistic Assumptions
1. Female subject constructed within social structures, in the realm of patriarchal assumptions. 2. No division between nature and culture exists: no essential human or feminine nature is inherent.
Methods of Challenging Women's Oppression
1. Critical appraisal of language and visual imagery to illustrate the construction of femininity and power relations between men and women-an important aim of the Research here too. 2. Draws on Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis to challenge social structures of male domination and psychology of female subjectivity.

Thus, to conclude, the Researcher desires to quote Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and leave the reader pondering- 'throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of femininity.... Nor will you have escaped worrying over this problem –those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply- you are yourselves the problem.' Hence, womanliness could be assumed and worn as a mask both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she has found to possess it...!



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GLOSSARY

BASIC WORD-CONSTRUCTS OF THE THESIS

androgyny — the state of exhibiting a combination of traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine traits.

avant-garde — term often applied to art or films that challenge both the content and, even more importantly, formal conventions dominant at the time. Avant-garde art or film tends as a result to be seen as difficult or demanding by audiences of the period.

bricolage — adapting elements from a standard package of signs to an alternative purpose, thereby undermining their usual meaning.

code — a system of signs that operates according to a set of rules that are widely understood within a culture or subculture.

Commodification — turning something into a commodity that does not fit intrinsically in the commercial sphere.

Commutation test — replacing one element in a communication (e.g. one word in a sequence) to highlight its particular contribution to the overall meaning (normally this is invisible because we are so familiar with the usual pattern).

onnotationc — the associations triggered by a particular sign.

co-option — the process whereby a dominant discourse apparently adopts elements of non-dominant discourses. By taking over surface elements only (e.g. key words, but not the ideas behind them), this drains the alternative discourses of their radical or oppositional implications.

Deconstruction — a method of analysis (particularly associated with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida) that pays attention to gaps, silences and inconsistencies in a text in order to explore its unquestioned assumptions and internal contradictions.

Determinism — laying all the responsibility for a phenomenon on specified causes (e.g. biological determinism places primary responsibility for social behaviour on the individual's genetic and physical make-up).

discourse — language understood as a social and institutional practice. Instead of viewing language as a neutral tool to produce meaning, discourse suggests that systematic ways of thinking about the world are already built into established patterns of language use. We, and the media, often reproduce these as if they were our own ideas. Discourse embodies ideology and therefore plays a major role in supporting or contesting power (e.g. feminist discourse contests sexist discourse).

essentialism — the belief that there is an intrinsic and inescapable difference between entities which does not need further explanation (in gender terms, this most often refers to intrinsic or natural differences between men and women). Essentialism holds that difference is prescribed and fixed, and therefore rejects the notion that gender differences, for example, are socially constructed.

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ethnography	the adaptation by researchers into media audiences of a methodology developed in social anthropology. The ethnographic method includes observation of, and open-ended interviews with, real audiences in the surroundings in which they normally receive the medium being studied.
femininity	the attributes that are conventionally associated with the condition of being female within a specific culture.
folklinguistics	widespread cultural beliefs about the characteristics of language use by different groups. These function as myths and do not necessarily represent current realities of language practice.
hegemony	a consensual system of viewing and think about the world, arrived at not through coercion but by winning voluntary agreement that this is a sensible or even natural way of perceiving reality. In hegemony, ideologies are naturalized to appear as 'common sense'.
ideology	a system of beliefs operating widely, but often without us being conscious of it, in a particular society and sustaining specific power relations e.g. of class, or gender, or ethnic dominance. Although some ideologies have higher status than others in our society, there is no single dominant ideology and a number of different ideologies compete continually for our attention and support.
Incorporation	see 'co-option'.
inscribed reader	the reader constructed by the media's modes of address (as opposed to the real reader, who may differ in many respects from this temporarily fabricated persona). (See also 'modes of address'.)
interpellation	'hailing' the reader or viewer, or strongly inviting him or her to adopt a particular stance in relation to the text.
intertextuality	the common practice in the late twentieth century of media texts referring to each other, implicitly and with the assumption that audience will pick up the references (this is particularly visible in British television advertising but is also, for example, a striking feature of Madonna's performances and of David Lynch's work). Our knowledge of these references contributes to the meaning that we derive from the intertextual text. (See also 'parody' and 'pastiche'.)
masculinity	the attributes that are conventionally associated with the condition of being male within a specific culture.
masquerade	literally this means putting on a mask or a disguise, but he term has been adopted in feminist film theory to suggest that when female stars exaggerate their feminine attributes, they denaturalize femininity and invite the audience to think critically and sceptically about the assumptions we normally make about it.
miseenscene	literally the staging of the scene for the camera, but now used to include the composition of the shot, choice of camera angle, framing lighting.
modernism	a cultural movement extending from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century and characterized by a desire to break free from bourgeois conventionalism, and

	respond constructively to the new 'modern' social and technological environment. Modernism was caught between angst about the moral consequences of the speed of change and optimism about the potential for reshaping the world that this offered. In the arts, modernism was by a self-conscious attention to, and experimentation with, form.
modes of address	the ways in which the media address us. These are built on assumptions about our identities and interests, and often invite us to accept the personae that they invent for us. We may, of course reject this position and find the modes of address jarring or off-putting (see also 'inscribed reader').
myth	a way of conceptualizing a subject that is widely accepted within a particular culture and a particular historical period.
parody	mimicking an original with ironic intent, in order to make a critical comment.
pastiche	mimicking an original for fun, with merely playful intent.
patriarchy	technically 'rule by the father or head of house-hold' but now widely used to signify systematic male domination.
postfeminism	an ideological stance based on the belief that the aims of feminism have been largely achieved, and that women can now accomplish whatever they want to, provided they are prepared to make sufficient effort. Postfeminism substitutes individual endeavour for collective campaigning feminists to change social institutions and the structural balance of power. Postfeminism is also associated with stylishness and the belief that it is possible to be both feminine and supportive of feminist objectives. Women who regard themselves as postfeminist will, however, usually reject the feminist label.
postmodernism	the cultural response, evident especially since 1970s, to cataclysmic global changes in information provision, the economy, work patterns and technology. This response has been characterized by a loss of faith in meaningfulness and originality, and a celebration of fragmentation surface texture and the breaking down of old boundaries (such as those between popular and elite culture or between masculinity and femininity).
poststructuralism	an analytical movement that challenges the notion of a unified subject, and the structuralist idea that meaning emerges from the clash of polar opposites. Influenced by psychoanalysis, it prefers to think of the individual as riven by fragmented subjectivities, and to approach the analysis of texts through the methodology of deconstruction (see also 'deconstruction' and 'subjectivity').
recuperation	see 'co-option'.
scopophilia	sexual pleasure derived from looking.
semiotics	an attempt to apply scientific principles to the study of signs in order to explain how meanings are produced.
sign	any physical manifestation (e.g. a sound or an image or a piece of writing) that refers to something beyond itself, in a way that

is widely recognized. A red rose may, for example, signify a flower, or romance, or (in Britain) the Labour Party.

signification the process of creating meaning through signs.

signifier in the terms of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, the physical manifestation that triggers the mental concept (or signified).

signified in Saussure's terms, the mental concept triggered by the signifier.

structuralism an approach to social and cultural phenomena that disregards surface appearances in favour of analysing the hidden polarities that govern the production of meaning.

subject although this term is used in a variety of ways, including the sense of 'subjectivity' explained below, it is easier to separate these terms, and use 'subject' to refer to the concept of a coherent rational and unified individual who has a significant measure of control over his/her actions desires and thoughts. The origin of this view of the subject is often attributed to the eighteenth century Enlightenment.

subjectivity the persona that we are invited to adopt a result of the way that we are addressed, either face-to-face or via cultural and media discourses. Each individual on this reckoning will experience a number of different, and even competing, subjectivities (for example, a woman may be torn between different subjectivities on the topic of abortion if she is both a feminist and a practising Roman Catholic).

ooyeurism deriving sexual pleasure from viewing titillating scenes from a clandestine position.

Filmography

Note: The film title is followed by the date of release, the production company and the name of the director.

The Accused (1988) Paramount (Jonathan Kaplan)

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974) Warner Brothers (Martin Scorsese)

Aliens (1986) Twentieth Century-Fox (James Cameron)

Awakenings (1990) Columbia (Penny Marshall)

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Body of Evidence (1992) Dino de Lauientiis Communications (Uli Edel)

Build My Gallows High (Out of the Past, in USA) (1947) RKO (Jacques Tourneur)

Calamity Jane (1953) Warner Brothers (David Butler)

The Color Purple (1985) Amblin Entertainment (Steven Spielberg)

Coming Home (1978) United Artists (Hal Ashby)

Desert Hearts (1985) Desert Heart Productions (Donna Deitch)

Double Indemnity (1944) Paramount (Billy Wilder)

Fatal Attraction (1987) Paramount (Adrian Lyne)

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe (1991) Fried Green Tomatoes Productions/Act III/Electric Shadow (Jon Avnet)

Gilda (1946) Columbia (Charles Vidor)

Girlfriends (1978) Cyclops (Claudia Weill The Good Mother (1988) Touchstone/Silver Screen Partners IV (Leonard Nimoy)

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The Color Purple (1985) Amblin Entertainment (Steven Spielberg)

Coming Home (1978) United Artists (Hal Ashby)

Desert Hearts (1985) Desert Heart Productions (Donna Deitch)

Double Indemnity (1944) Paramount (Billy Wilder)

Fatal Attraction (1987) Paramount (Adrian Lyne)

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe (1991) Fried Green Tomatoes Productions/Act III/Electric Shadow (Jon Avnet)

Gilda (1946) Columbia (Charles Vidor)

Girlfriends (1978) Cyclops (Claudia Weill The Good Mother (1988) Touchstone/Silver Screen Partners IV (Leonard Nimoy)


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